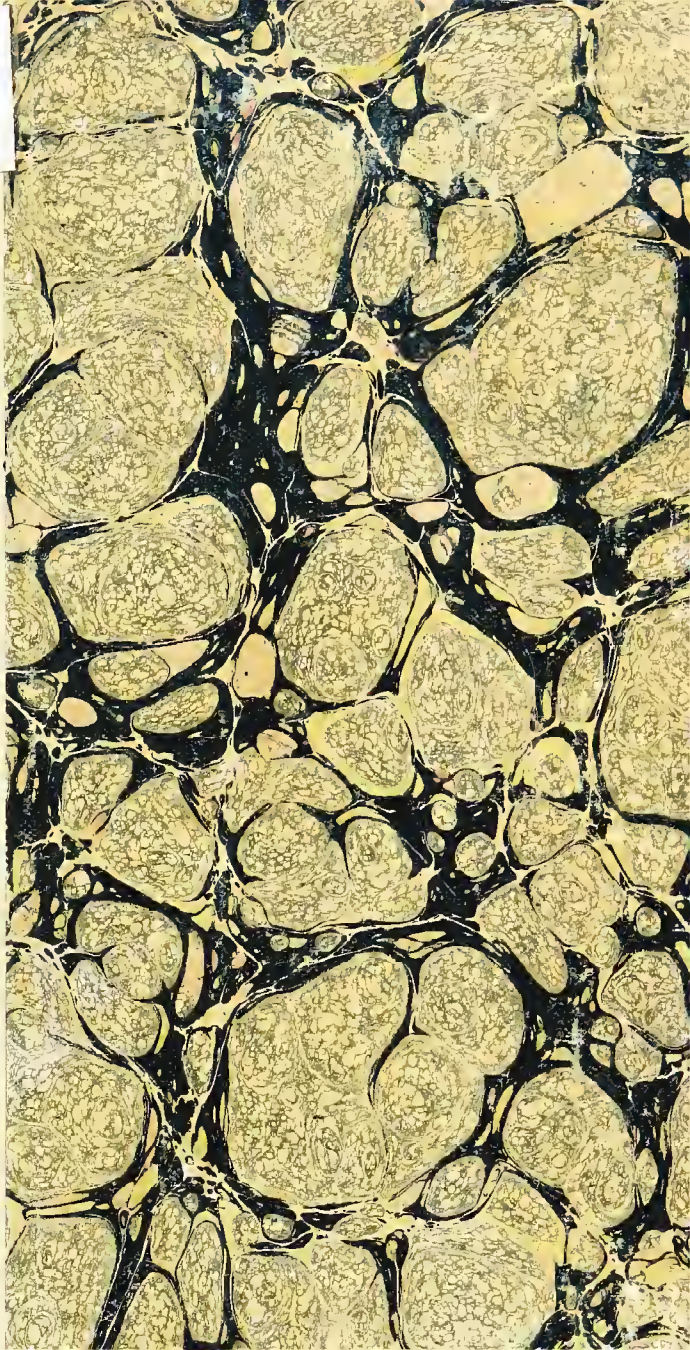


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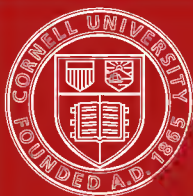
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THE LIFE OF
DENMAN
THOMPSON



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DENMAN THOMPSON.

LIFE OF
DENMAN THOMPSON
T

(JOSHUA WHITCOMB).

BY
JAMES JAY BRADY.

E. A. MCFARLAND & ALEX. COMSTOCK, PUBLISHERS,
ACADEMY OF MUSIC, NEW YORK.

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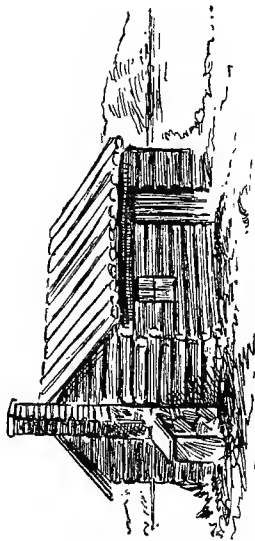
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INTRODUCTION.

UNCLE JOSHUA needs no introduction to the American public. At every fireside his name is prized and his virtues known. He is, in truth, a fond relative to us all, tenderly considerate, sweetly honest and helpful, and as cheering by his presence and simple story to-day as when in other times we sat in childish delight to hear a dear old uncle tell of the good and kindly heroes who had gone before.

Who will try to estimate the good this affectionate, homely, manly man has done for his fellow brother? What a giving out there is of the graces of humanity in his simple dramatic story! The embroideries of art have no place in the narrative. It is full of the perfume of country fields, freshened by the dew, and beaming with a delicate, exhilarating life from the morning sun. The hardships, trials and disappointments of a driving world are forgotten in the chastened dream of childhood, home and the heart ties of the family altar. What sweet music these impressions make in the soul of all of us! Uncle Joshua is the kindly spirit that waves them into tender being, as the dews from the skies vivify the sweetest flowers that adorn the earth.

He must be a queer manner of man who will say that he is not the better for these hallowed emotions, and would spurn their spell. He must be a lonesome person, indeed, at odds with the glorious beauties of the fields, the skies, and the refinements of man's social and spiritual nature—a poor, miserable unit, drawn up and wound round, like a silk worm in his cocoon, and shutting out all sunlight, daylight, and every joy of expanding nature. It is hard to believe there are many such. Dear old



JENMAN THOMPSON'S BIRTHPLACE, GIRARD, PENN.

Uncle Joshua says there are none. He says human nature at base is all right. We only look at it wrongly, as it were, and take a shunted gleam or reflected surface for the intrinsic metal. Wherever he goes there is living testimony of the verity of this theory. His big, generous, unselfish nature begets an atmosphere of confidence, purity and rest, and stirs up the deeper, truer nature of every one, just as the radiant sunlight wakes into life and bloom the loveliest buds that grow.

All hail to such an one! His gracious influence is needed. The stage, like every department of life's labor, has plenty that is depressing and baneful. The wholesome among players, as among plants, we wish to cherish. It is doubtful if there is any more reaching place for general good. Recreation is a natural want. Let us have it pure and hearty. It is like a sound sleep. In the "Old Homestead" the soothing conditions are perfect. We may rest secure within its comforting arms, with the stars shining brightly without, and balmy breezes blowing gently in at the windows laden with good cheer from the surrounding and beautiful hilltops, and all within calm, trustful and happy, far away from the bartering and wearing spirit of the metropolis and its controlling pulse.

Talk about your missionaries, philanthropists and other noble friends of humanity! in this age of savage rush, hardened conscience and unending toil, who is there that administers to the tired and drooping spirit with the same delicious sense and buoyant effect that our homely and loving friends at "The Old Homestead" do?

Such types, such associations, are to honest life what salt is to an egg. They give flavor to our better feelings, and temper the light with which we regard misfortune and uncharity.

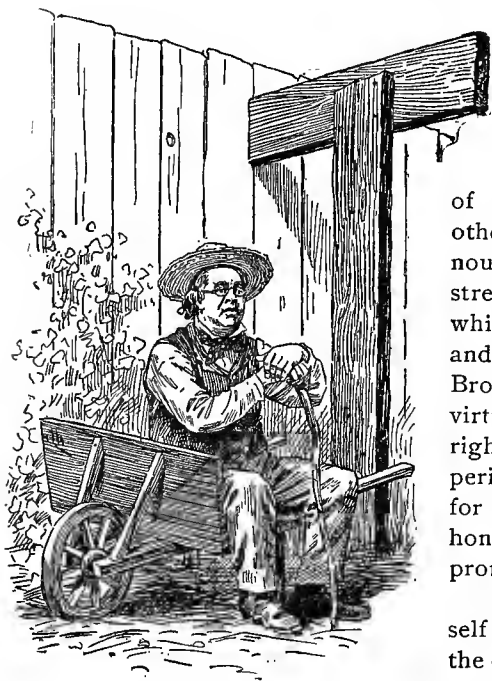
Again let us say welcome to our good friends, Uncle Joshua, Aunt Matilda, Cy Prime, Seth Perkins, Rickety Ann, and the other lovable characters that are brought to our notice in this dramatic poem of simple country life, and the precious "Old Homestead," and secretly pray that they and their kind may be always with us.



DENMAN THOMPSON'S FATHER AND MOTHER.

Still living and enjoying excellent health.

NEW ENGLAND HOMES AND CHARACTER.



HERE is a certain dignity attaching to the name of New England, which is due as much to the element of home life as to any other consideration. It has nourished principle and strength in its young which have led to decent and powerful manhood. Brought up to feel the virtue of right living and right doing at a formative period of life, the chances for mature graces and honors are more than promising.

They are taught early self-denial, self-reliance, the duty of a conscientious regard for the Sabbath day, and the function of study in raising man's lot among his fellows.

The fruit of this home training and association has been made evident in characters that have graced the most beautiful works in our national literature, that have lifted men upward and onward in spiritual and intellectual study, that have inspired

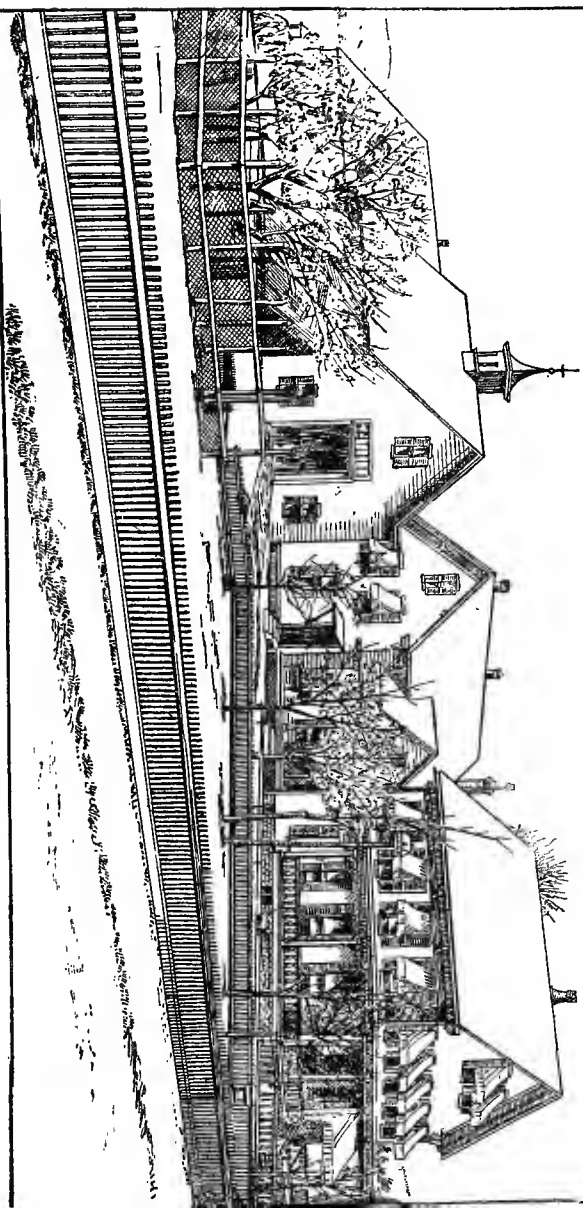
writings to charm and better the world, and that have been a leaven of common sense and moral rectitude to balance and chasten every community.

Thus it is that so many places, humble in themselves, with no bigger concern of commerce than a crumbling flour mill or a fitful shoe factory, are familiar names to the general reader. They have produced what is higher than the wares of traffic. They have marked individuals with traits and habits that have stood them well in the halting and struggling ways of life, and blossomed characters instilled with the juices of a manly nature. Men with a plan of life. Men with an honest faith in a Divine Ruler over all things. Men who sought the right and just in every place and in every affair, and had the moral courage to stand by a fair conviction. Men who worked as well as prayed, and hated the idle and profane as they would a thief in the night. Men who prized a home, cherished it, and imbued its young with thoughts of learning and Christian experience.

Is there not honor enough in this for the restful hamlets high up in the New Hampshire and Vermont hills? The soil, hard, rocky and ungrateful, is chary enough of its favors, and bread is truly to be won by the sweat of the brow. Its greatest glory is greater than the products of the ground. It is to be read in character. The daily life of these brave, honest, God-fearing men, who tilled the soil in summer and split rocks in winter, would appear tame if written out.

But the plain village farmer of those out-of-the-way towns, esteemed for his uprightness, thrift and intelligence, will give good blood and an honest bent to some famous man—a man who will be proud of his ancestor, whom the bad feared and the good honored; a man whose nobility of nature gave breadth to the narrowness of his calling. Some woman of more than ordinary distinction as a beauty may owe it to some old man who matriculated into a handsome and hardy man in this school of nature, and whose features were hardened by care and exposure into an expression of honest and heroic simplicity.

Many an Uncle Joshua has gone forth into a larger and



DENMAN THOMPSON'S RESIDENCE AT SWANZY, N. H.

more selfish world, touched for good by the germs of truth, piety and industry which had flowed into his nature from these heroes of the farm.

Swanzy is one of these garden spots for the holier virtues of humanity—just far enough away from Keene to preserve its homely integrity; a place where Sunday is the Lord's day in truth, a day when the window blinds of the corner store are shut in earnest, and the clatter of the old mill is stopped. Outside the Old Homestead appears Uncle Joshua, his ruddy face set off by a broad collar, and dressed for meeting, waiting for Aunt Matilda to plaster her water curls and arrange her "best gown." Not a worker is to be seen to-day. The instinct of pure devotion pervades the people. All workday pursuits are given up in fact and spirit. If the thoughts of any run in worldly channels, there is no outward sign. The stillness is almost oppressive. The fields are given over to the silent processes of nature. Wives and daughters are bringing out their clean frocks, and with folded kerchief and hymn-book will soon be in procession for the meeting-house. One day in seven, that which is set aside for spiritual duty, is a sacred trust from God to these simple people, and as such they keep it. To-morrow they will have to begin a patient struggle with a stingy soil.

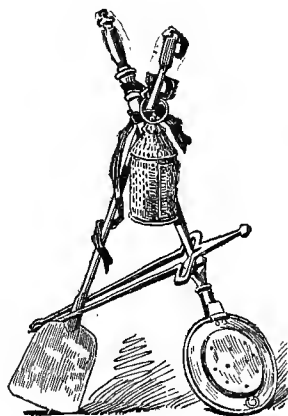
Their gains come slowly and must be used wisely. They will hold to the pennies tightly, but give you any personal service ungrudgingly. They will plan and work for you in a harvest pinch without a thought of reward. Nothing goes to waste with them.

The winter nights are given to sober discussion at the country store or serious reading at home. The oldest or brightest boy is at college, or sure to be—a comforting thought. The other children are bending over the kitchen table, busy with the lessons for to-morrow.

They are up in the affairs of the township, state and nation, and sift the questions of politics with remarkable scent and wisdom.

A much-tried race, it has been said, with the sun and wind

as often working them ill as good. Severe in mien and manner, perhaps, but softened within by the graces of truth and piety; not cultivated, yet wise; nursed by nature and led by bible precepts; men who pleased you by their simple faith and the healthy content with which they accepted their condition.





CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH OF UNCLE JOSHUA.

DENMAN THOMPSON was born in a hamlet called Beech Wood, about three miles from Girard, Erie County, Penn., October 15, 1833. His father and grandfather were natives of New Hampshire, and in a direct line of descent from one of the original sixty to whom the Township of Swanzey was deeded by the Massachusetts authorities in May, 1735. A survey was made of sixty-three house lots of three or four acres each. The scheme, in surveying sixty-three lots, was to have sixty proprietors, each entitled to one share, and then to have one share for school lot, one for the first settled minister, and one for the cause of the ministry.

The terms by which a person could become a proprietor were as follows: He should pay five pounds at the time of admission to such privileges; he should be located upon his land within three years from the date thereof, and should continue to reside thereon for at least two years. The funds raised by these requirements were to be used in defraying the expenses of the survey, and in building a public house of worship.

Among the persons who became the original proprietors of the township under these conditions was "John Thompson, lot 43," and from this Christian pioneer dates the Thompson family in Swanzey. In the original records, lot No. 16 was inscribed to the school right, No. 48 to the first settled minister, and No. 47 to the cause of the ministry.

From that primitive date to this, Thompson, *pere*, has had some official place in the governing board of the town.

Captain Rufus Thompson, the father of Denman, and now a hale old man of over four score of years, in the spring of 1831 decided to go West, as a field of greater promise for himself and wife. He entered the wilderness of Pennsylvania, and at a

distance of about three miles from what is now Girard, Penn., where were clustered the houses of a dozen or more hardy pioneers like himself, he made a clearing and began the erection of a log house. The settlement was called Beech Wood.

At this primitive place, and in the humble cabin which his father had put up with his own strong arms, Denman Thompson was born. The family remained here until Denman was fourteen years old, and then returned to Swanzey. This was in 1847.

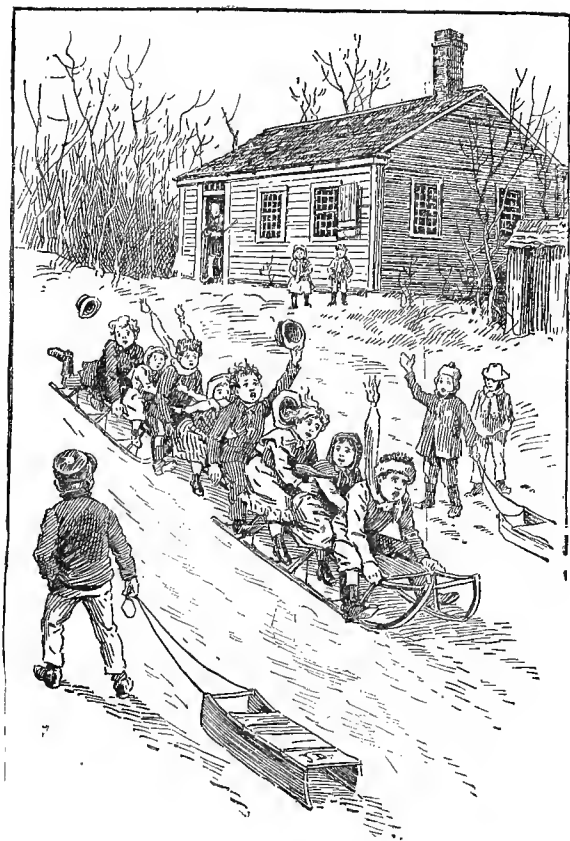
Mr. Thompson, senior, had a good deal of mechanical genius, and when anything of a building order was needed he was the neighbor in demand. There was not much pay in these jobs, but there was a world of friendly satisfaction in serving one another at that early day, far removed from the grudging spirit of our time.

The farmer's life was a stern and hard one, the same as his father's before him, amid the rocky hills of his New England home. It was a warfare with the elements and unyielding nature. But he was a serene, dignified, resolute man, who had no thought of parleying with Providence or the stern necessities of his vocation.

The love of home, however, that dwelling spot the association of which clings eternally to the New Englander, born and bred, burned in the rugged farmer's heart and memory like delicious incense, and eventually led him back to the "Old Homestead" and the scenes of early manhood. He is there now, frosted and worn with the weight of years and toil, but as positive, self-assertive and clear of judgment as ever, and amply able to hold his own against the worldly wisdom and skilled logic of his popular son, "Uncle Joshua."

After the return to Swanzey, in 1847, until 1850, young Denman was sent to Mt. Cæsar Seminary during the winter months, and the rest of the year worked with his father at the carpenters' trade. He was a sturdy boy, more fond of sports than books, and kept the feminine part of the household on the verge of dreadful expectancy by his daring pranks.

The most stirring event of the year in the village was the



advent of a circus, and young Thompson always led the drove of boys who went far out the country road to meet the incoming vans; and for weeks after the show had gone, to quote his father, "Denman was walking upside down."

He was a frank, open, big-hearted boy, full of animal life, ready to share anything with his mates, and join any sport, and therefore liked to an unusual degree. There are many home-spun, hearty men in the village to-day who are fond of telling of the likeable traits of young Denman Thompson, and of the many jolly times they had together as boys.

This whole-hearted, unselfish disposition of the boy has become one of the most pronounced traits of the man, as we will see later on, and has lifted the spirit and won the esteem of many a comrade actor and business acquaintance.

Three winter terms at Mt. Cæsar Seminary, Swanzey, represents all the time he spent in acquiring a higher education through school mediums. His father was anxious that he should obtain a useful knowledge in this respect, and made sacrifices to that end, but the youth's bent was not toward letters. The charms of an out-door and romping life were nearer to his thoughts and desires, and kept all his energies in the train of a sound and wholesome physical growth.

He longed for travel, excitement—something out of the dead drift of remote country life. Like most New England youths, he had heard a great deal about Boston. It was to him the sun of another and bigger world, from which went forth the rays that enlivened and enlightened every place else. He longed to see it, and know more of its wonderful life. He had heard of its great people and doings from the elders who were fond of lingering around the church porch, and felt that the Boston paper which found its way into his father's hand was freighted with special interest and power.

So, a bright morning in the spring of 1850, when he had just turned seventeen, he gathered together a few simple necessities, and bade a tearful good-by to the now famous Old Homestead at Swanzey.

The journey was made the subject of private and even public prayer. Neighbors "came in" to talk it over. Mother was sad, but trustful. Father resolutely said, "Thy will and not mine be done, O Lord."

Plainly dressed, hopeful and strong, young Denman Thompson, the envy of the other village boys, started upon his slow-paced journey to Boston.

Any country-reared person will know what that was to him—how grand and mysterious the town seemed to him, with its confusion of streets, crowds of people, strange noises, myriad lights and numberless wares; how it impressed and oppressed the stranger, and made him for the first time feel painfully lonely and out of tune.

But this New England lad was made of sterner stuff than lamb's wool. He did not take fright at the unfamiliar signs of strange living. His keen senses and naturally bright mind were quickened as never before. There was a taste of life in this whirling scene which made him long for the magic of mind which made all these things seem natural and wise.

He had begun life with practical tools and no favors.





DENMAN THOMPSON (25 years of age).

MANHOOD AND PROFESSIONAL STRUGGLES.

CHAPTER I.

IT was not long after his arrival in Boston before Tryon's circus was announced, in flaming posters and with all the tinkling cymbal of language to which such shows are given. It started the boyish fever for circus life, and led to his seeking for and obtaining a place as property boy with this circus. He remained with it to the end of the season, during which time he took a more important part in the bill than handling banners and poles. He rode in the opening pageant, and developed an ability as an acrobat that made him an efficient leaper among some thirty or more performers.

It was in the winter of this year, 1850, that he made his first appearance upon the professional stage, at the Howard Athenæum, Boston. It was simply as a supernumerary, but it brought him his first earned money on the stage. Charlotte Cushman was playing *Lady Macbeth* at the "Howard" on this occasion, and Mr. A. J. Neafie, a capable and conscientious actor, appeared as *Macbeth*.

Shortly after this nondescript début, in January, 1851, he went to New York. At that time two men, whose names are forgotten, were exhibiting a collection of paintings of famous Indian chiefs by George Catlin, on lower Broadway, nearly opposite to the then well-known Duseldorf art gallery. Young Thompson sought work with them, and was made doorkeeper, lecturer and general factotum. Quick witted, confident and industrious, he gathered enough facts from the catalogue, added to what he had read of Indian life, to make a good story, and became a valuable adjunct to the exhibition.

That restive spirit so characteristic of the young New Englander was still uppermost in the character growth of our

young friend. He soon tired of this position and went to Lowell, Mass., where his uncle, D. D. Baxter, had offered him a place in his dry goods store.

It was in the old Lowell Museum, Lowell, in 1852, that Denman Thompson had his first speaking part in a play. He appeared as *Orasman* in the military drama, "The French Spy," and did a number of fancy dances between the pieces. His success in this respect did not help matters at his uncle's store, where he served in the ornate capacity of a ribbon clerk, and soon led to his quitting the town of looms, spindles and factory girls for Worcester, Mass., where he remained one season, dancing his way into the affection of the towns people. Then for another season, and until about 1854, he became an itinerant player, belonging at different times to wandering companies managed by James Lingard, George Kames and William Henderson, the latter now manager of the Academy of Music, Jersey City.

In January, 1854, he went West at the invitation of the manager of the Athenæum, Cleveland, and played low comedy in the regular stock of this theatre, appearing with Anna Cora Mouett, Edmon S. Connor and stars of equal dramatic importance.

In May, 1854, he was engaged by the veteran John Nickinson as a member of the stock company of the Royal Lyceum Theatre, Toronto, playing small Irish and negro character parts and dancing hornpipes, Highland flings and Irish reels between the pieces. These variety tid-bits of dancing and singing between the plays of the evening were very popular at this date, and the actor who was able to satisfy the taste of the time with even moderate success had an advantage with the public, which pleased the managerial heart and helped the player.

Thompson became a great favorite with the old managers and local theatre-goers in Toronto, and with the exception of one whole theatrical season, which was spent professionally in Chicago and New York State, and a few months abroad, he continued to make the Canadian city his home until 1868. It was here he married and where his three children, now living, were born.

A curious old play bill, under date of March 19, 1855, in which Mr. Thompson appears in a small Irish part, gives an interesting glance at a popular style of entertainment at that time, and may revive, among many, pleasant recollections of the day when there were lots of good honest amusement and less of the art of stage dressing and lackadaisical play building.

"Daddy" Rice, "the original *Jim Crow*," was singularly successful in his delineations of the aged negro, and supplied an evening of humorous entertainment which none of the delli-tanti minstrels of to-day can approach. It had the rugged lines and quaint charms of homely nature, than which, drawing-room models are a barren substitute.

It was in the rôle of a "fancy darkey," in the play of "Extremes," during the engagement of Peter Richings and his daughter Carolina Richings, the latter afterward famous as an operatic singer, that Mr. Thompson made his first marked hit at the Royal Lyceum Theatre.

In August, 1855, Mr. Thompson went to Chicago under an engagement to John Rice, manager of the Chicago Theatre, to play second low comedy. The season was a prosperous one, and due mainly to the success of the sensational drama, "A Glance at New York," in which the popular Frank Chanfrau appeared as *Moze*; and Mme. Albertine, a widely celebrated and brilliant danseuse. Mme. Albertine is now a resident of New Bedford, Mass., and totally blind. Her case has been peculiarly unfortunate. A more beautiful, graceful and accomplished premier danseuse than she it would be hard to name, indeed, if the thing not impossible. The affliction came to her suddenly and at a time of superlative success and health. She is almost forgotten now by the admiring world that in other days was proud to worship at the shrine of her professional triumphs. Almost alone, unable to follow her profession, and deprived of the greatest personal blessing in human life, her days would have been bitterly, cruelly dreary but for a few noble friends, of whom Denman Thompson is glad to be considered one.

At the close of the Chicago season, for a short time during

ROYAL LYCEUM

TORONTO.

INDUSTRY. INTEGRITY. INTELLIGENCE.
JOHN NICKINSON - - - - - LESSEE AND MANAGER

MORE NOVELTY!

J. NICKINSON,

Emboldened by the success attending his efforts to amuse the public of Toronto during the last Two Years, and being determined to merit a continuance of patronage, begs to announce that he has (at great expense and with considerable difficulty) effected an

Engagement for Six Nights Only--Positively! And No Re-Engagement!

With the Distinguished Artists well known throughout Europe and America as the "First" in their peculiar and wonderful performances!

THE ORIGINAL JIM CROW,

MR. T. D. RICE!

And the Celebrated Tight Rope Dancer
HERR CLINE!

Who will appear with the regular company of the Royal Lyceum.

MR. T. D. RICE

As "JUMBO JUM" and "GINGER BLUE"; or, The Virginia Mummy!

THIS EVENING, MONDAY, MARCH 19th, 1855.

The Performances will commence with (for the first time in Canada) the Laughable Comedietta, written in London expressly for MR. T. D. RICE (the original Jim Crow), entitled

JUMBO JUM!

JUMBO JUM.....	MR. T. D. RICE
Solomon Sligo.....	Deborah..... Miss Phillips
Mr. Grub.....	Mr. Johnson Arabella..... Miss Cook
Captain Seymour.....	Mr. Chester Lady..... Mrs. Brink
	Laborers, etc., by Company.

AFTER WHICH THE CELEBRATED ARTIST,
HERR CLINE,

WILL APPEAR AND

Dance the HIGHLAND FLING in Costume on the Tight Rope or Corde Elastique

Together with his astonishing Metamorphosis and Feats of Daring, received each night with dec ded marks of approval and delight.

To Conclude with the Original Farce of the

VIRGINIA MUMMY!

GINGER BLUE.....	MR. T. D. RICE
Captain Rifle.....	Mr. Chester Servant..... Mr. Johnson
Dr. Galen.....	Mr. Petrie Porter..... Mr. Barker
Charles.....	Mr. Brink Lucy..... Miss Cook
O'Leary.....	Mr. Thompson Susan..... Miss Phillips

The Celebrated Dancers, MONS. and MADAME BOUXARY, are engaged for a limited period.

BOXES, 2s. 6d.; Pit, 1s. 3d.; UPPER BOXES, 1s. 10½d.; TICKETS for UPPER BOXES, admitting Lady and Gentleman, 2s. 6d. Doors open at 7¼, commence at 8.

The undersigned will not be responsible for any debts contracted for this establishment, OR BY MEMBERS THEREOF, unless under written order.
JOHN NICKINSON, Lessee and Manager.

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN!

VIVE L'EMPEUR DES FRANCAIS!

Lovell & Gibson, Printers.]

[Yonge Street, Toronto.

the summer and fall of 1856 he played at Rochester and Syracuse, under the management of Brown & Biddle. George Brown, of this firm, subsequently entered the restaurant business in New York, and became widely known as the proprietor of "Brown's Chop House," a favorite up-town resort for journalists and actors.

In 1856 Mr. Thompson returned to the stock company of the Royal Lyceum Theatre, Toronto, and remained there through the successive managements of Mr. Marlowe, Miss De Courcey, J. C. Myers, C. T. Smith, Little & Flemming, and Henry Linden.

A peculiarity of the actor at this time was his extreme recklessness with regard to money, and an ingenuous disregard for serious study and rehearsals. No matter how much money he earned, he was never able to keep any. He had little idea of the value of dollars. Money in his hands was a good deal like water in a sieve. He was strictly temperate, and always of plain tastes. But his heart was as soft as a woman's, and always in commotion for some unfortunate brother.

This sympathetic quality has always been a dominant trait in his character, and is stronger to-day than ever. And it is of that honest origin which makes his acting such a natural, living thing, free from any vain display, and throbbing with the instincts of rugged human nature.

If the hosts of people alive to-day, who have found a timely and kindly friend in Denman Thompson at some darkened or helpless period in their careers, were to raise their voices in a chorus of praise, it would ring to the skies, and echo back again in resonant sounds as deep and full of joyous melody as the greatest organ that mortal hands have ever touched.

This moving quality of manhood, which leads to helpful deeds for the inherent joy of doing, and not the report, is a grace of heart that adds more dignity and sweetness to life than all the other virtues, and sheds over all a light that reflects of heaven. There is a principle of strength in it, too, which is bound to make a natural man, and this man, endowed with a good moral

constitution, is sure to attract the worthy wherever his lot may be cast.

"Uncle Joshua" is such a character, off the stage as well as on, and in the changing scenes of the dramatic story, the homely manner, honest deeds and kindly nature of the Swanzey farmer are the natural expressions of the actual man, stirred into a vivid showing by the circumstances of stage.

He was cast for a variety of "low and eccentric" comedy parts in the range of managerial changes, and became enormously popular with the local patrons and newspapers. His favorite characters were *Salem Scudder* in "The Octoroon," *Myles na Coppaleen* in the "Colleen Bawn," *Barney* in the Falconers' drama, "Peep O'Day," and *Uncle Tom* in "Uncle Tom's Cabin."

A programme of the Royal Lyceum Theatre, February 6, 1857, in which "Mr. Thompson" appears in an Irish character part, and as the hero of Mrs. Stowe's famous story, is here printed, as a likely matter of interest to the casual as well as special reader.

He was equally good and infectious as a rollicking Irishman, the homespun Yankee, with an unctuous Down-East air and dialect, or the ignorant negro.

It is a curious fact that he never could be induced to make much serious preparation for a performance. He had a good memory and a rare genius for emergency, but no application. Time and again when the text of the piece had gone from him because of a superficial study, and it looked as if he might flounder and ruin a situation, a ready wit and perfect ease saved him, and provoked the audience into the heartiest good humor.

He was always borrowing articles of stage dress, and it was a frequent remark that Thompson never owned a pair of "sand shoes," which he required for fancy dancing, then popular between the pieces. When the performance came, if he couldn't get them of one, he got them of another in the company, and so great was his good nature and so well was he liked, that it always created merriment, and never annoyance. The manager, John

ROYAL LYCEUM

TORONTO.

INDUSTRY.

INTEGRITY.

INTELLIGENCE.

JOHN NICKINSON - - - - - LESSEE AND MANAGER

NOTICE.

THE DRAMA OF "DRED," having been received with great gratification by a Full and Fashionable Audience, induces the Manager to announce for repetition this evening, Mark Lemon and Tom Taylor's celebrated London Version of Mrs. Beecher Stowe's work,

UNCLE TOM'S CABIN, OR SLAVE LIFE.

Produced with due regard to effective Scenery, Properties, Dresses, Decorations, Negro Melodies, Etc., Etc.

MISS C. NICKINSON AS "ELIZA,"

Mr. Petrie, as Legree; Mr. D. Thompson, as Uncle Tom; Mr. H. Cook, as George Harris; Miss Phillips, as Cassy; Miss V. Nickinson, as Topsey. All the Company and Numerous Auxiliaries, Negro Minstrels, Etc.

The Performance will commence with the Laughable Farce of

IRISH ASSURANCE; OR, YANKEE MODESTY.

Pat, Mr. D. Thompson. | Nancy, Miss I. Nickinson.

THIS EVENING, FRIDAY, FEB. 6th, 1857.

The Performance will commence with the Laughable Comedietta, entitled

IRISH ASSURANCE; OR, YANKEE MODESTY.

Pat.....	Mr. Den Thompson	Mr. Clifton.....	Mr. Johnson
Mr. Buffer.....	Mr. Petrie	Nancy.....	Miss I. Nickinson
Capt. Herbert.....	Mr. Hill	Miss Buffer.....	Miss Phillips
Susan.....		Miss S. Lyon	

DANCE, - - BY - - MAD'LE ELISE

To Conclude with a Revival, with all its Original scenic effects, machinery, etc., entitled

UNCLE TOM'S CABIN; or, Slave Life.

NOTICE.—It should be stated, alike in justice to MRS. STOWE, and in explanation of the liberties taken with her admirable story in this Drama, that it does not profess to be a mere Stage version of the tale, but a Play in which free use has been made of many of her chief personages and most striking incidents! The interest of MRS. STOWE'S story runs in three distinct channels, following successfully the fortunes of Eliza and George, of Uncle Tom and Eva, of Emmeline and Cassy. For Dramatic effect it is necessary that these threads should be interwoven, and that what cannot be connected should be abandoned. This is what has been attempted in this Drama, in which, while there has been both the wish and effort to preserve the spirit which breathes through Mrs. Stowe's pathetic pages, the relations of characters and the sequence of incidents have been altered without reserve.

Produced under the Immediate Direction of MR. J. NICKINSON.

Mr. Shelby.....	Mr. Marlowe	Solomon Spicer.....	Mr. Notter
Simon Legree.....	Mr. Petrie	Skunk.....	Mr. Johnson
George Harris.....	Mr. Henry Cook	Sambo.....	Mr. Hill
Uncle Tom.....	Mr. Den Thompson	Quimbo.....	Mr. Cooke

Adolph, Sam, Rosa, Mose, Pete, etc., by a Numerous Auxiliary Force.

ELIZA.....	MISS C. NICKINSON
Cassy.....	Miss V. Nickinson
Aunt Chloe.....	Miss S. Lyon

In the course of the piece the CANADIAN ETHIOPIAN SERENADERS will perform the following melodies, etc.: Opening Chorus. Masser Sound Sleeping. Ring de Banjo. Poor Old Slave Little More Cider.

"OLD FOLKS AT HOME" WILL BE SUNG BY MISS C. NICKINSON AND CHORUS.

ROBINSON CRUSOE and MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR in Rehearsal.

REQUEST.—Gentlemen are most earnestly requested not to give their Tickets to boys at the door, as considerable disorder arises from the practice, which is, moreover, a great injustice to the Manager.

THE undersigned will not be responsible for any debts contracted for this establishment, OR BY MEMBERS THEREOF, unless under written order. JOHN NICKINSON, Lessee and Manager.

BOXES. 2s. 6d.; Pit, 1s. 3d.; UPPER BOXES. 1s. 10½d.; TICKETS for UPPER BOXES, admitting Lady and Gentleman, 2s. 6d. Doors open at 7½, commence at 8.

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN!

VIVE L'EMPEUREUR DES FRANCAIS!

The "Merchants" Cheap Press.]

[Farrell & Jacques, Printers and Designers.

Nickinson, was continually rebuking him for this personal neglect, but never changed him from the habit, and had many a hearty laugh over the blundering success of the popular player.

Strong limbed, full cheeked and chested, with a thick growth of red hair, brushed straight up from a full forehead, and large, good-natured eyes, he was a handsome man. Equipped as he was physically, and the pick for a soldier, he could never carry out the part with becoming stage gravity.

Upon the first occasion that he was cast for a soldierly part, he innocently created a scene of mirth that upset the spirit of the play entirely, and turned scenes of serious sentiment into the liveliest sort of comedy. He was dressed in the regulation suit of scarlet, with gilt braids and all the small insignia of office, and meant the best in the world. But his round, good-natured face, with roguish eyes and shifting manners, did not fit the sanguinary clothes nor situation, and the more he tried to appear haughty and serene the more he reddened and the more he shifted, until the uproar became so great that the play could hardly proceed.

From that night forward he eschewed all such rôles, and abandoned serious leanings toward the tragic side of the drama.



MANHOOD AND PROFESSIONAL STRUGGLES.

CHAPTER 11.

IN the spring of 1862 he went to England, with the avowed hope of getting a chance to play *Salem Scudder* in "The Octoroon," then playing at the Drury Lane Theatre, London, with remarkable success, and also in the provinces. He failed in this object, much to his chagrin, as he had trusted to make a fine impression in this rôle. He secured a position, however, as "low comedian" in the stock company of the City of London Theatre, and remained there under circumstances of moderate favor until the fall of the same year, when he returned to Toronto.

There was a remarkable show of friendly feeling for the actor upon his return to the Royal Lyceum at Toronto, and for several weeks after the opening night the house was thronged with boisterous admirers, for they had a habit then and there of showing their preference for a player, which left no room for conjecture, and was especially sweet to the favored one.

From this time until 1868 he remained at Toronto under the successive managements of Henry Linden, J. C. Myers and George Holman.

An admirable and versatile fancy dancer, he was in constant demand for this popular feature between the pieces of the evening, and by his quaint and humorous manner as well as amiable disposition, became an object of lavish favor from the local theatre-goers.

Upon one occasion, as a lively bit between the plays, it was announced that the manager, Henry Linden, and Mr. Thompson, would appear respectively as *Richard III.* and the *Duke of*

Richmond, and settle with boxing gloves, once for all, the historical family feud. Each was to attire himself in the most ludicrous costume he could devise, and without the knowledge of the other, and then at the proper cue they were to march boldly forth upon the mimic battle-field, and set to pounding each other with all the skill and vigor at their command. Thompson was arrayed in a glaring grenadier coat, dragoon high fur hat, black skin tights, blue garter and "essence shoes." Linden came forth in a short linen jacket, a tight-fitting bathing shirt of a dozen lurid colors, striped linen trousers as wide as a sail, straw hat, and generally "light and airy" costume. Their grotesque appearance provoked the heartiest good humor, and when *Richmond* had been hit hard by the enraged *Richard*, smuggled a small rubber ball into his mouth, and turned toward the audience with his jaw swollen to an enormous size, the audience rose in an uproar, and *Richmond* was made the hero of the night, despite his boxing discomfiture.

The honest face and simple manner of the actor invested every incident of a humorous character with a double charm and winning expression peculiarly his own. And as indicated before, this sincerity of countenance is a natural reflex of the actor's true nature—a character quality which has made his word as good as gold with business acquaintances, and the special pride and happiness of the family name.

How far this trait has become a governing principle of conduct was practically illustrated several years ago. Salaries were not large for professional services during his long term of residence at Toronto. Twenty-five dollars a week was a large sum, and they were few and far between and of singular success who received that amount. Mr. Thompson's salary was considerably less than this a good deal of the time he spent there. Generous to a fault, with a family to support, and an unbroken habit of remembering the "old folks at home," it may be expected there were financial "ups and downs" in the Thompson household of those days, and some affairs of trade were entered upon an account of "faith and hope."

When "Uncle Joshua" was born into the dramatic world, and touched the secret springs of human nature as had never been done by any kindred creation of the Yankee type, it was like a find of the richest ore, and paid out almost unendingly. It was his first thought then to look up and pay off any and all claims, of whatever date, with interest simple and compound, and he advertised in important Canadian papers for that purpose.

Upon his first visit to Toronto after this fortunate turn in the tide of his affairs, he had messengers scouring the city for a week, looking up old acquaintances and creditors who had answered his advertisement. He paid out in all \$1,900 during this engagement. This unusual proceeding caused a great deal of local comment, and brought into strong relief the seamy side of human nature as well as the good. All of the claims were outlawed and most of them forgotten. Finally, Mr. Thompson said to one doubtful claimant: "Now, tell me, did I ever owe you anything?"

He replied: "Well, to speak the truth, you did not. But I was hard up—dreadfully so; and a friend of mine prompted me to try this dodge." He kept the money and left a good deal better in heart.

Another party followed him to the theatre, and sent in a bill for cannons. At the sight of this odd item, he laughed immoderately for several minutes, and finally said: "Well, boys, I may be responsible for a good many funny purchases in my day, but I'll swear I never bought cannons. No, sir; I am not blood-thirsty enough for that. I draw the line on cannons."

This incident has often been referred to by those who witnessed it, and provoked much mirth. Probably some old firm had an ancient charge on their books of this sort, and thought the occasion a good one to cancel it.

It was a common practice among the players of the Toronto Stock Company in those early days, as it is in a measure now, under the head of "Summer Snaps," to organize in the summer months upon a commonwealth plan, and arrange a tour through the Ontario and Quebec provinces. A programme of a miscel-

laneous order was generally given, with a strong leaning toward minstrelsy. There was the usual first part, with the company blacked and arranged in a semi-circle, to sing ballads, comic ditties, say funny things and listen to popular music. Then followed "Ethiopian Varieties," a Yankee farce, or a roaring burlesque upon circus life, like the "Saw-Dust Brothers," in all of which our hero took an active and popular part.

He could never learn to play the bones, however, suitably enough for a solo number or in passable time with the band. He could talk, sing and dance well, but with the bones he was weak, hopelessly weak. As he was desirable "on the end," it was devised to have a screen back of him in the first part of the entertainment, and behind this was placed a nimble bone player. Mr. Thompson went through all the motions of an ecstatic bone player, and the dummy back of the screen produced the sound.

Mr. Thompson retired from the stage in 1868, and followed commercial pursuits until 1871. He then returned to the stage and played successively in Toronto, Montreal, Rochester and Syracuse, acting the principal rôle in small pieces like "Pyke O'Callaghan," "Chimney Corner," "Troublesome Yankee," etc. He followed the variety theatres at this time because they offered larger salary.

In 1874 he went to New York and obtained an engagement with a pantomime and comedy company to go to the West Indies. When they arrived at Kingston they found the place scourged with small-pox, and immediately set sail for Baranquilla, United States of Columbia. He escaped the small-pox by this change of course, but incurred the yellow fever. He was isolated from his friends and fellows, therefor, and kept in a rude tent on the coast for ten or twelve days. His naturally robust constitution stood him well in this crisis, as did his naturally good temper and will. But for these administering virtues, he would have been done for early in the sickness, so dreadful were his sufferings and surroundings; that is, so far as we can estimate results from a physical standpoint. He always looked on the bright side of things. Trials and misfortune did not sink his soul into despair and

cripple effort, no more than a few gathering clouds of mist blight and wither the radiant landscape.

As soon as he was strong enough to walk he sought Captain Eckert, of the steamer *Etna*, and prevailed on him to take him back to New York. It was doubtful if he could pass the quarantine officer, and the captain and a few fellow passengers whose sympathies were enlisted were palpably uneasy when the official presented himself. Thompson braced himself for the ordeal, for he was as weak as a kitten, as he says, and when the examiner struck him a hardy blow on the chest, as if to test his physical tone, they all looked despair. Said he afterward: "That blow nearly settled me. Its pain tingled in my veins for weeks afterward. But I was resolved to get back home, and would not give up. It was do or die. That shock, and a long drink of cold water I sneaked away and got in spite of the doctor's orders, I believe drove all the yellow fever out of my system."

His next engagement was with Murtha and Campbell, at the old Globe Theatre, New York, where he played such parts as *Zebulum*, in the "Fool of the Family."

In January, 1875, he went to Harry Martin's Varieties, Pittsburgh, and while there wrote and played the first sketch of the now historically famous "Joshua Whitcomb."





THE OLD FARM HOUSE KITCHEN. (OLD HOMESTEAD, ACT IV.)

JOSHUA WHITCOMB.

JOSHUA WHITCOMB is a "dramatic evergreen," and will continue to be so as long as Denman Thompson lives, said a Boston critic, after the rural Yankee had been coming and going for nine successive seasons, always warmly welcome, and as freshening to the spirit and body as the changing landscape of the early spring.

Theatre-goers had been sated with the artificial in plays and players. Affairs and people of the stage were adjusted and regulated with a mechanical nicety about as infectious as a read sermon or an almanac cover. The elocution and diction were good, opportunities many, sentiments lofty and pure, intention, situations and climaxes all right—but the moving principle of naturalness was wanting. That quality of truth which galvanizes the hearer into an active personal interest and overcomes the mimic character of the scene until the curtain falls and dispels the illusion, was a rare attribute. Stage heroes of the Yankee type that had been offered from time to time were of the Brother Jonathan pattern, and about as much like the genuine character of the soil as gilt is like gold. The average specimen was lank, weazened and selfish, with a certain low cunning in trade, and an eccentric bent that invariably run to vulgarity. He was a gross burlesque of the natural man, whose lovable traits, humorous enough in their homely lines and expression, never degenerated into irreverence and coarseness, and were as true to honest manhood as the needle to its pole. John E. Owens came nearest to the natural presentment of a Yankee with a humor, dialect and personal manner that partook of the green hills, scented meadows and youthful memories of Down East farm life, until "Uncle Josh" came down from Swanzev with the simple charms

and serene dignity of the New Englander as he had been ordained by both nature and God, and who was as much and sweet a feature of the soil as the buttercups, dandelions and daisies.

The friend of our childhood had come a long way to see us. His old straw hat, ill-fitting clothes, cow-hide boots and beaming spectacles were more beautiful to our eyes than the most graceful and expensive adornments of current fashions. Our hearts warmed and our eyes softened as we went back to the old farmhouse kitchen with its big rafters, high dresser and large open fire-place. What a place of cheer at night, brightened by a roaring log fire! The true heart of the house, where we loved to lounge and linger. A mellow, brown old kitchen, full of homely things, the vital centre of a pure and pious home life—how many costly rooms simulate in their expensive furnishings your sombre colors! The room and its simple furnishings were enriched by shadows from the dancing fire-light, or the few sunbeams that came in the small windows, and every simple feature of the home-like place was mellowed into a tone of cheerfulness which reached the heart and satisfied the day of yearning as we have never felt again.

What visions of skies and woods and water and far-off hills were let in through the windows of memory by the bright, beautiful home light of the old homestead! We could hear the crackling back log, eloquent with fiery tongues, as it sizzled, sputtered and fought against the fates that would exhaust its life blood for the higher comfort and cheer of the human kind. We were boys again, buoyant, wholesome and happy, and Uncle Joshua was the inspiring guide who carried us back to these precious scenes of "heaven on earth," the recollection of which exerts a greater moral influence upon our lives than all the after-thought and study of a maturer age.

The doors of every heart were thrown wide open and beat a hearty welcome for the honest New Hampshire farmer, and he has been the cherished guest of our affections since.

Until his Pittsburg engagement Mr. Thompson had affected Irish comedy, with considerable success, and was convinced that

therein lay his best hopes for enduring success. He traveled about from city to city doing an Irish piece, in which his clever dancing was a distinctive feature. He went to Pittsburg in this rôle and was stricken down in the midst of his engagement by a severe attack of rheumatism, and obliged to give up playing for a time. As he depended in a large measure for popular success upon his terpsichorean indulgences, this malady was a serious blow to his prospects. It looked as if he must abandon his profession or submit to a lowly place in the ranks. As salaries in those days were about one-third what they are now, he could not have saved much for a possible contingency like this, even if he was of frugal habits (which he was not), and the outlook was far from promising of aught but pain and care.

It was clear that if he were to remain an active and honored figure of the stage, it would be by the work of his brains to the exclusion of his heels, and not a divisional affair as heretofore, in which both extremities partook of more or less credit.

It was under these circumstances, and while confined to his bed, racked with rheumatic pain, that he conceived the idea of playing a Yankee character of the quiet, homely kind—one that depended for its effects more upon dialogue than dramatic business.

The result was "Joshua Whitcomb."

At first it was the merest sketch, not taking more than twenty or twenty-five minutes for its representation, and only the vaguest suggestion of the character in its present perfect development. It was produced in this embryonic form for the first time at Harry Martin's Varieties, Pittsburg, in February, 1875, and remained two weeks with conspicuous success. There were two scenes—the street scene, in which Uncle Joshua upon his first visit to Boston had a number of exciting and laughable adventures with low types of city life; and the birthday party at which he made the liveliest sort of merriment by his rustic manners and homely talk.

At Rochester, in the spring of 1875, "Roundy," the boot-black, and "Tot," the crossing sweeper, were added to the sketch.

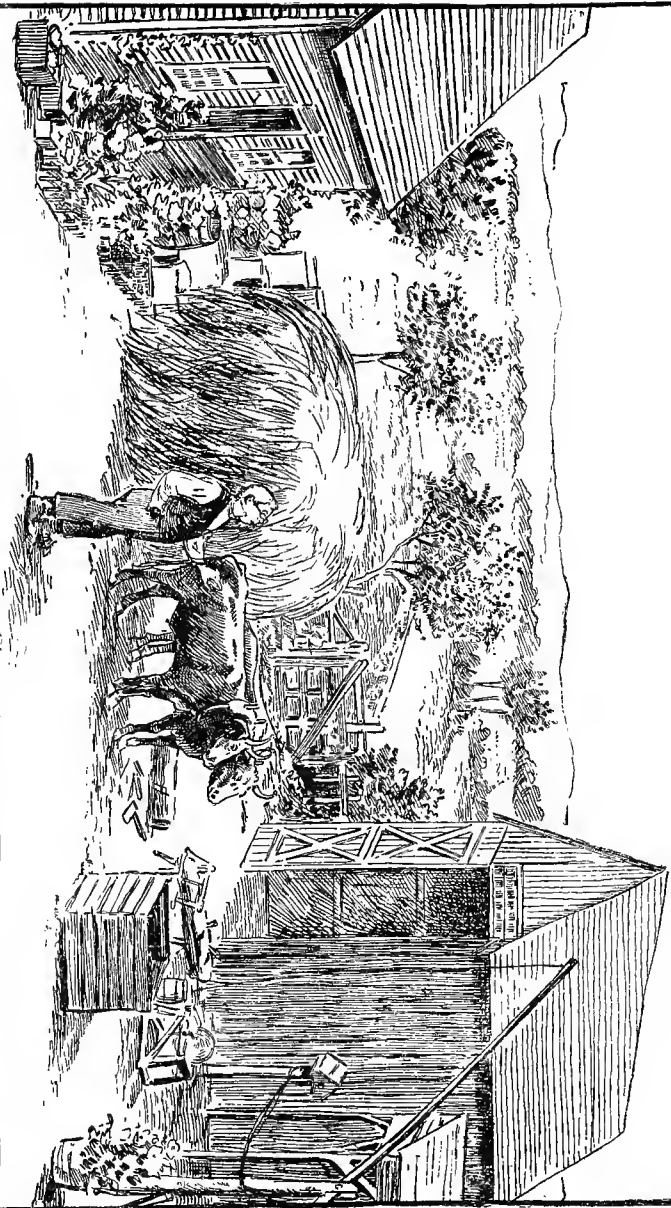
They were familiar figures in the metropolis, wise beyond their years, roughened by the hard knocks of fate, but ingrained with qualities of nature that only needed a little ripening time and sun to develop into strong and lovable character. They gave added zest to Uncle Joshua's city trip, and photographed a phase of lowly city life that intensified the simple charms of the quiet country home and its rustic king.

From Rochester he went to the Coliseum at Chicago, managed by Hamblin Brothers. Here it was, and during this engagement in the summer of 1875, that Mr. Thompson met Mr. J. M. Hill, a Chicago merchant, who afterward became his manager and evinced a managerial talent that commanded the admiration and respect of the whole theatrical business. He was a Yankee himself, remarkably energetic and shrewd, and rose to a pitch of enthusiasm over the homely merits of the piece, still an after-sketch, which led to his giving up his legitimate business in Chicago the following year and joining fortunes with Mr. Thompson. He continued in the relation of manager and partner with Mr. Thompson six years, during which time there was not a single marring incident, and there never existed a writing of any sort between them in business dealings.

This original sketch was as happily natural in its character, woof and humorous incident as the four-act play into which it finally developed. The homely handiwork of the piece, seasoned with the true flavor of simple rustic life, and the real Jonathan of the farm, uncouth in dress and dialect, but honest, self-reliant and kind, touched the golden keys of memory and awoke a sweet response in every heart, full of tender recollections and soothing emotions.

The public wanted more of it. The space, quiet, sunshine, verdure and homely characters of remote country life as reflected through Uncle Josh and his dramatic etching, inoculated the audiences with a taste for the pure pleasures and woodland odors of extreme New England, and they longed for more of its companionship.

A second and a third act were added at Chicago during the



FARM YARD SCENE. (OLD HOMESTEAD, ACT I.)

years of 1876 and 1877, and in the spring of the latter year it was presented in the dignified proportions of a three-act play at Haverly's, now Hooley's, Theatre. The venture did not prove immediately successful in the new form, and the management was considerably out of pocket at the close of the Haverly Theatre engagement.

In the summer of 1877 Mr. Thompson organized a company and determined upon a tour of the New England towns, beginning at Bridgeport in September, 1877. It was thought that in this section, above all, Uncle Joshua would be appreciated at his true value, and bring honors and profits to all concerned. It proved an illusive hope, at least on this occasion, and after seven weeks of "hope deferred" the season was closed.

The company then went to Buffalo and began a Western tour under the personal direction of Mr. J. M. Hill. Mr. Hill remained constantly with the company from this time for the next five years. When he and Mr. Thompson separated they had divided over \$400,000 in profits from the play "Joshua Whitcomb."

Not until Denver was reached in the winter of 1878 was there any radical change in the fortunes of the play and players.

The bitter was taken with the sweet, and all remained buoyantly confident of the result. The fact of the star having been previously identified with variety theatres no doubt militated against his early success in many places, and saddled the prepossession of many newspaper writers.

But at Denver the local critics were taxed for fine words to show their admiration for the beautiful stage character, and the business of the engagement resolved itself simply into a question of space.

In March, 1878, Emerson's Opera House, afterward called the Standard Theatre, was rented for Uncle Joshua's San Francisco début. This was not the house for a good local effect with a new attraction, and one praised for its New England atmosphere, but preferred theatres were not available or the presiding geniuses were averse to the experiment. Acres of advertising space were covered with pictorial and descriptive paper. The

newspapers were used as never before to exploit the homely virtues and quaint humor of the Swanzey farmer. There was an audacity in the cost and spread of these announcements which startled the gossips and inspired a good deal of idle comment on the folly of the enterprise and the probability of failure. The latter feeling grew apace in social centres before the production, and the critics went the first night more or less prepared for saddening results. The very extreme of managerial flourish no doubt occasioned these misgivings, at least on the part of the critical guild.

On the opening night the house was only half full. To the credit of the management be it said, there was no attempt at bolstering for a good first impression through a gratuitous audience. The faith and principle of the enterprise were not of that sort. They had that to offer which it was felt would commend itself for honest admiration, without any showman's tricks. And they were right.

The newspaper censors vied with each other in writing fine phrases of Uncle Joshua's peculiar charms and the rare beauty and entertainment of his play.

The second night the theatre was almost filled. The third night it was comfortably so. The latter half of the week and during the rest of the engagement, running through an extended period of eight weeks, seats were held at a premium and hard to get at that. Uncle Joshua was the dramatic idol of the day. He brought with him a patch of the clear blue sky, green hills, clover meadows, the old farm house with its treasured joys of childhood, and a life as full of wholesome flavor and vitality as the wild apples of a country orchard, which boys are bound to steal, and relish above all other sweets. There is hardly any person, whatever his environment of growth and city life, who has not a latent sweetness of nature, waiting to be unloosed by the right conditions of time and circumstance, into feeling as pure and tender as any emotion of first or second childhood.

There was good news abroad. Every person became a personal herald. Families, friends, strangers sat down together to

enjoy the abundant feast of all that is best in human nature. It was a long thanksgiving service in which everybody seemed to join.

The return from San Francisco to the East was a journey marked by the same demonstrations of affectionate welcome. It was then concluded to go into New York and present "Joshua Whitcomb" for a long period. The Lyceum Theatre, now the Fourteenth Street, was secured from the lessee, Mr. A. M. Palmer, for six months upon a liberal rental basis.

In September, 1878, "Joshua Whitcomb" was introduced to a New York public at the Lyceum Theatre. It was freely mentioned that the engagement was to be for six months. This playhouse had been a conspicuous failure up to this time. These facts were juicy items for the theatrical wiseacres, impecunious and obtrusive, of which New York is a sort of hot-bed. Besides, "Hill," the manager, hadn't rubbed the dust of commerce from off his coat sleeve yet. A capital centre like New York is not to be won so easily as Bangor, St. Joe and Ogden. Arrogant folly!

To be frank, these enemies of thought had a laughing time and merry talk for several weeks. They didn't calculate upon that touch of human nature which makes the world of kin, about which poets have sung and prophets have written.

The advertising methods of the management again attracted general notice. Newspaper space was bought up with the enterprise of a dry goods merchant. Bill posters chuckled and were happy. Yet back of it all there was something to sell, and customers soon found it out. It was wholesome amusement, delightful companionship, a gracious joy that stirred up the springs of one's spiritual nature.

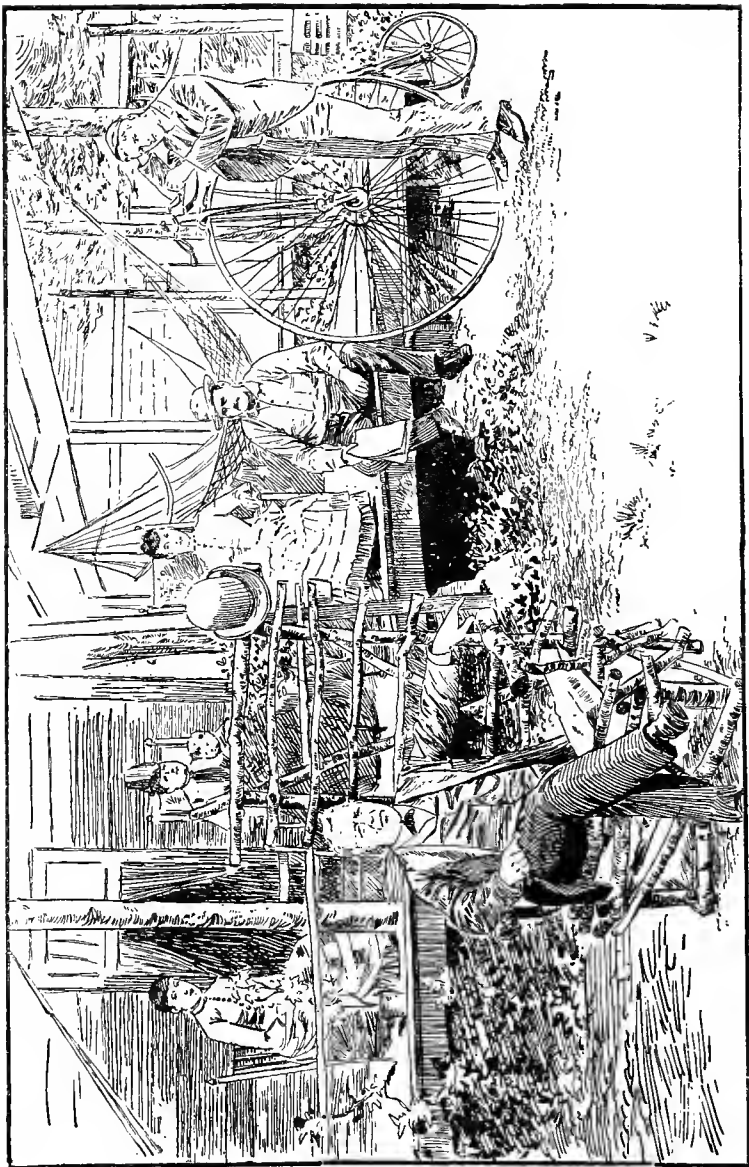
New York soon followed the world and was happily exercised over "Joshua Whitcomb" as it is now over "The Old Homestead."

From this time until "The Old Homestead" was presented as a continuation of "Joshua Whitcomb," the latter play was held in affectionate regard everywhere, and succeeded financially as well beyond all precedent.

An old Philadelphia lady summed it up correctly when she remarked after she had seen Mr. Thompson as Uncle Joshua, "That man is not acting—he portrays a living character." And as a minister out West said to his congregation after witnessing the play—"If all plays put upon the stage were as good as this one, I should recommend you to become regular patrons of the theatre, for no sensible person can object to harmless amusement."

They were both right.





DENMAN THOMPSON'S SUMMER RESIDENCE AT CHESTERFIELD LAKE, N. H.

THE OLD HOMESTEAD

DENMAN THOMPSON



THE sum of human happiness was added to considerably everywhere "Joshua Whitcomb" and its noble characters were seen. Its homely charms warmed into life precious memories. Every heart responded to its natural life. The hardened lines of a formal, selfish world were melted in their places, and faces made to beam with softening thoughts of other days and their best joys. It was a glad experience and did the soul good. It spread good cheer wherever it went. It was a sort of dramatic landscape, fragrant and glowing with healthy life, with Uncle Joshua lifted up and standing out from it all, an evident king, and the greatest glory.

It was a good thing for the world, and, as with a good book, there was room for more. Every natural heart longed for more of the pure country life and its invigorating spell. The hope was continually expressed that Mr. Thompson might create another play with the same refreshing power. "Joshua Whitcomb" had become a familiar story. Its rural characters and woodland flavors were as sweet to the senses as ever, but that restless law of nature which seeketh after newer and higher beauties, whatever the acquirement, thirsted for more of the same delightful companionship.

These influences resulted in the writing of the "Old Homestead." In "Joshua Whitcomb" the son Reuben, who is the virtuous pride of the old people, is charged with robbing the Cheshire Bank, and the disgrace of such an accusation against his boy, the soul of honor and honesty, as he thought, almost



REUBEN WHITCOMB.

crushed the old farmer's spirit and blighted their home. The piece ended in the boy's exoneration and a thanksgiving at the "Old Homestead," in which all felt a glowing personal interest. But the odium of having been arrested for so serious a crime, which was sure to cling more or less to his name among the simple country people familiar with the fact, was the germinal idea for a new play. Reuben was to leave the old farm for New York to build up a good name and fortune among strangers, and Uncle Joshua's trip to the metropolis to look up the absent boy, from whom he had not heard for a long time, and the humorous incidents such a journey made possible, furnished the lines of work which have been so admirably followed in the now famous play, "The Old Homestead."

In the first scheme of the piece it was intended that Uncle Joshua should make the trip from Boston by a Sound steamer, and his experience on one of these "floating palaces" was to furnish much humorous amusement. But several farcical sketches came into the theatrical field before this idea was formulated into dramatic shape, and the plan was abandoned.

Finally Mr. George W. Ryer, a business acquaintance for whom Mr. Thompson had evinced a strong liking, was asked to give his attention to the construction of a play to succeed "Joshua Whitcomb," as a continuation of the same theme, and with the same principal characters. Mr. Ryer undertook to write the play himself, but in a short time confessed that his knowledge of "Josh Whitcomb" and New England life was too slight to admit of satisfactory results without the aid of Mr. Thompson himself.

The effect of this was that Mr. Ryer joined Mr. Thompson at Lock Haven, Penn., about December, 1885. "Joshua Whitcomb" was then being played through Pennsylvania, changing the place of performance each night. They began the work at once, and despite the inconvenience of daily travel, finished the play in fifteen days. "During the progress of the work," said Mr. Ryer afterward, "Mr. Thompson overflowed with humorous anecdote and pleasant reminiscence, one-half of which, if I could remember, would adorn and prosper several plays."

"The Old Homestead" was presented to the public for the first time at the Boston Theatre, April, 1886. Uncle Joshua was always a welcome guest in Boston, and the receipts of the first week in the new play were \$11,279.25. Several minor characters like Eb. Ganzey ("Whistling Eb."), the carrot-headed Irishman in the last act, and "The Hoboken Tough," which have since fitted so pleasurably to the spirit and scheme of the play, were not in the original production.

It may be interesting to know that Joshua Whitcomb, who has given so much good cheer into the world, is a reproduction of two actual personages in Swanzey, N. H., known there as Captain Otis Whitcomb and Joshua Holbrook. Captain Otis furnished the comedy and Joshua the more serious elements of this unique and life-like combination. They are both dead now, although the former lived long enough to see Joshua Whitcomb become a favorite type with the public.

Aunt Matilda and Cy Prime are also translated from actual life in New Hampshire. We recognize in the patient, kindly woman before us, weaving, knitting and stitching her life into the fabrics in hand, a magnetic type of New England spinsterhood, whose largeness of heart and sweetness of instinct was a blessing and pride to many neighborhoods. The original of Aunt Matilda was a sister of Joshua Holbrook, and known to all the people of Swanzey as "Aunt Rhody"—a tender, honest, faithful, respectful unit who transmuted the joys and sorrows of her homely life and the home into pure gold.



CY PRIME AND SETH PERKINS.

Cy Prime is a character photograph of one of the most noted liars in Cheshire County.

Seth Perkins is a creature of the imagination, but so true to flesh and blood and distinct from the other personages in the play as to form an exquisite gem of the New England soil, to be cherished by every respecter of genuine worth.

Rickety Ann is a poorhouse waif, of which there are many in the country towns, adopted to do chores and light menial



AUNT MATILDA WHITCOMB AND RICKETY ANN.

work about the farm. She is a queer tangle of good and bad traits, bungling most errands, fretting the chickens, "sassing" the neighbors' boys and help, and as full of animal life and romp as a young colt. She tells her whole story when she says, "I kin climb a tree like a boy—want to see me?" She and the big overgrown boy, Eb. Ganzey, are natural wild flowers, racy of the New Hampshire hills, that grow up without any pruning



HAPPY JACK.

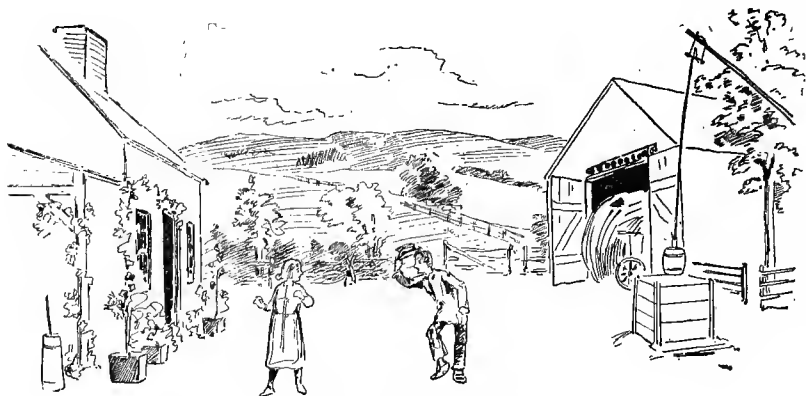
save what nature gives them, unsettled, untamed things to the end, but full of rugged strength and warm color.

These characters are all brought forward in the first act of the play, which takes place on the Old Homestead Farm, at Swanzy, N. H. The scene is idyllic and domestic. It is a singularly realistic picture. The odor of sweet-briar and honeysuckle is in the air. The deep green lane, the old brown kitchen, the bench and basin beside the door, the kitchen garden, the bee-hive close by, grindstone under the maple and old well-box and oaken bucket, are familiar sights that make one believe the good old days have come back again. The personages before us are not actors, with parts to speak, but our old farm friends, living as they have always

lived, and turning back upon our thoughts the sunshine of early days.

What a beautiful lesson Uncle Josh teaches when he gives the tramp money enough to take him to his home, and reflects, as he sits outside the cottage door—"My boy is away from home to-night; perhaps he's in trouble, and if he is, I hope some kind hand will be stretched out to help him." He then sinks into a gentle slumber and dreams of his boy, and voices from the cottage swell out an accompaniment to the dream with the old song, "Where is My Wandering Boy To-night?" It forms a touching picture, and has had an effect for good in more than one life.

Here is an instance: A young man living in Minneapolis, whose home was near Bangor, Me., had been out West for several

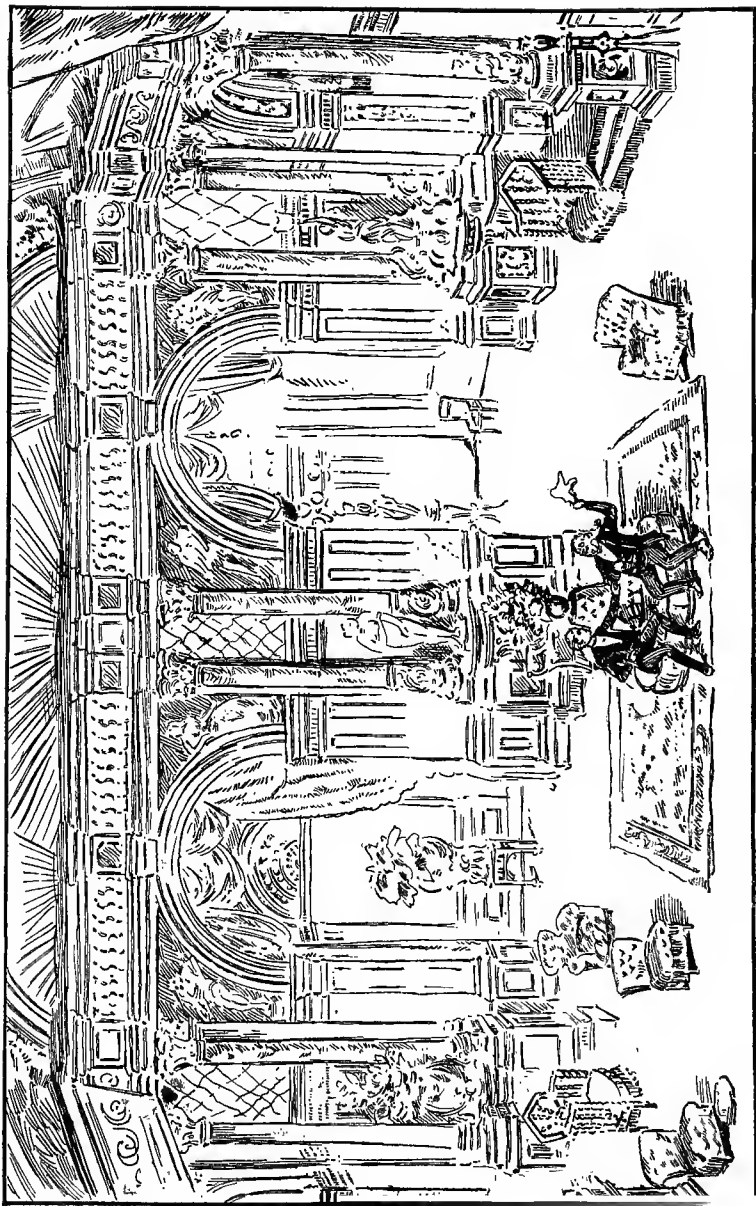


"Just play bread, dont care for turkey

years, and his letters to the "old folks" began to get wider and wider apart, until six or seven months had gone without a word passing between them. His own words to Mr. Thompson can best express his feelings: "When I saw the great anxiety of the father for the son, and the dream, I cried like a child, and I



"Are you hungry?"



INTERIOR OF THE HOPKINS MANSION. (OLD HOMESTEAD, ACT II.)

went straight to the hotel and wrote home, and I'm going to write every week of my life. You know I was raised in the country, and the play took me back to my old homestead."

The one shadow that fell upon his simple, pious, strong life was on this account. His boy, Reuben, had gone far away to a great city and he had not heard from him for "nigh onto a year." He determines to seek him, and as he does he leaves all the quaintness and quietness of the New England scenes behind him and comes to New York.

The second act reveals Uncle Joshua in the house of a millionaire. Henry Hopkins, his host, is an old New Hampshire boy and play-fellow. They sat on the same bench in the country school. The city man has grown rich and formal, and his wife and daughter affect fashion. His footman, whose name is Fогarty, is called Francois and dressed gorgeously. "Gosh, I tho't he was some foreign lord," said Joshua, after their first meeting; and the novelty of knee breeches brings forth the homely criticism, "Got his trowsers gallused up pretty high. Outgrewed them a leetle might, I guess."

Joshua is amusingly out of sorts with his luxuriant surroundings. His best efforts to be polite are bunglingly funny, though sincere. The proud Mrs. Hopkins is obliged to take refuge from his well intentioned compliments. What an honest ring and glow there is to this short dialogue at their introduction, though rather confusing to the sumptuous Mrs. Hopkins before a numerous company:

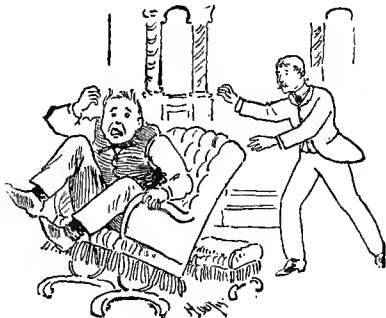
Joshua—Let me see, you was a Richardson, wa'n't you?

Mrs. Hopkins—Yes, Mr. Whitcomb.

Joshua—Betsey Richardson?

Mrs. Hopkins—Elizabeth Richardson.

Joshua—Yes, I remember, we used to call you Betts for





MR. AND MRS. HOPKINS.

short. I can remember the first time I ever see you, just as well as if it was yesterday.

Mrs. Hopkins—Indeed !

Joshua—Yes, you drove down to the store with your father on a load of wood. I never will forget how purty you looked that day, in your new caliker frock and sun bonnet, and your



FRANCOIS FOGARTY.

MISS NELLIE PATTERSON.

blue yarn stockings hangin' down over the side on the load of maple.

No wonder the daughter said, "Ma, he didn't look half so funny in the country."

And after he said to Judge Patterson, a friend of the family, "You ain't no relation to old John Patterson, that used to keep



the soap factory at Chesterfield, be you?" Mrs. Hopkins was compelled to say, "Henry, for goodness sake take him away or I shall go frantic."

Innocent mirth begins to bubble like a mountain spring as soon as Joshua returns from the stables. "Gosh, I tho't I sot on a cat," as he jumps from the first chair he touches. The farm

yield is not so good as it used to be—"Then we've had a good deal to contend with. The season's been dry, and we've had two circuses and a balloon ascension and a wrestlin' match, and one thing and another, and old Abe Hill always contended such things hurt crops wuss than grasshoppers."

And to the query, "Are the Peterson boys all living?"—"All living but Bill, and I guess he'd a bin if he'd staid to home. Bill always was of a roving turn of mind, and he took a fancy and went out West somewhere—out to Montany, I guess it was—and he got tangled up with politics and whiskey and a piece of rope, and it kind o' discouraged him a leetle might."

And when he comes suddenly upon the nude statue—the Venus de Medici—the merriment swells to a roar. "If I'd put that up in my cornfield," he says, "I'll bet I'd be arrested afore night." And he wants to know if "that was a New York lady afore she died," and "what do you do with her when the minister comes?"

As Joshua is "a leetle might skittish about fire," he is given his host's private office on the first floor for a sleeping room. Says he before going, "You might as well leave a sasser of taller alongside the fireplace; I may want to grease my boots before you get up in the morning."

The homely virtues and phrase of Uncle Joshua shine all through the splendid setting of this act, and afford rare and delightful entertainment.

Joshua finds his boy in the third act. The scene takes place before Grace Church on Broadway at night. A number of city types, humorous and pathetic, pass review in this act. There is the drinking, homeless wanderer, "The Salvation Army," "The Hoboken Terror," "The Apple Woman," "The Letter Carrier," and many familiar city characters. Uncle Joshua's rustic, simple bravery is brought into vivid action here, and causes a good deal of humorous excitement.

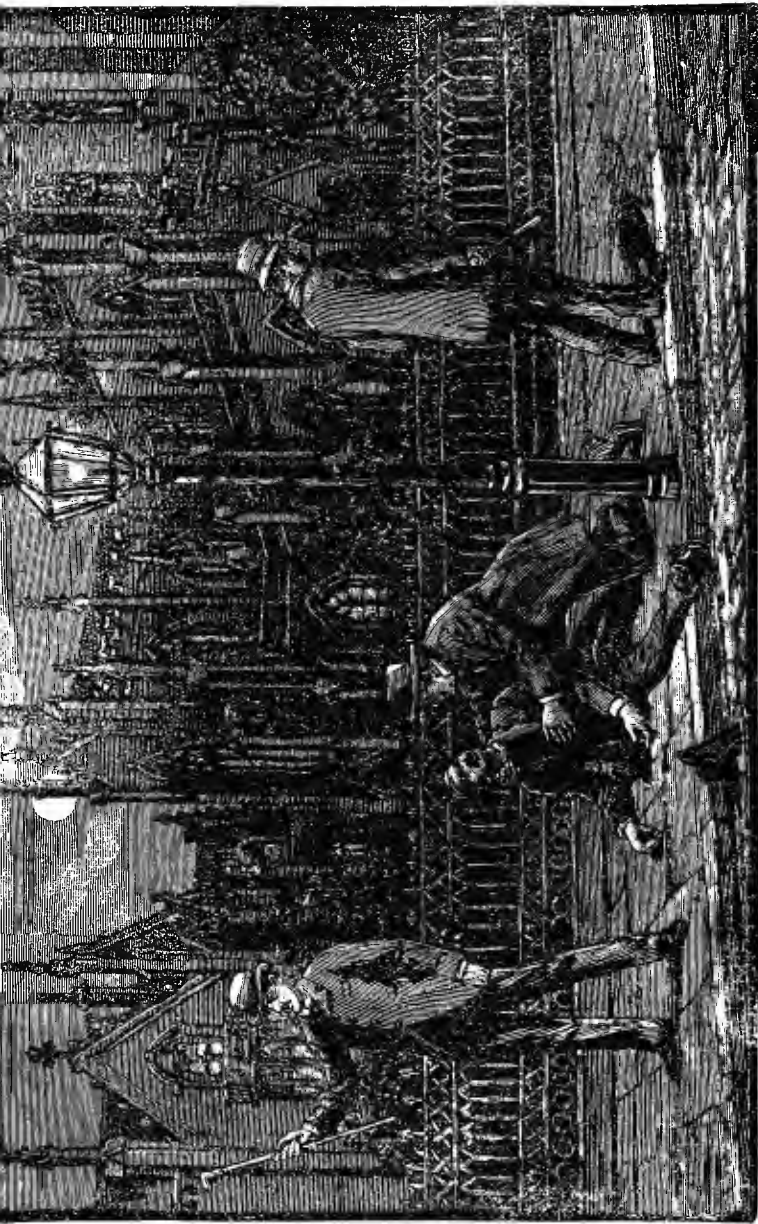
The meeting of the honest old farmer and his lost son, as he comes staggering into his arms, is touching in the extreme.

After all the excitement and worrying change of the last two acts, the Old Homestead of the fourth and last act is a refreshing contrast.

This scene is beautifully and truthfully described by Mr. A. C. Wheeler, and is here quoted by permission:

Joshua had just come in from the barn, and says to Tilda, who sits in her accustomed place knitting, "Not a critter on the place but'll sleep as warm as a meader mouse under a hay-stack." Aunt Tilda lays her knitting softly down to wipe a tear-drop





GRACE CHURCH AT NIGHT. (OLD HOMESTEAD, ACT III.)

from her eye. She is thinking of Reuben, and Joshua tells her that the boy will be home to-night. "He didn't want to come home with me, and hev the neighbors say, 'His old father hed to bring him home again ;' he's too proud speret-ed fer that !"



You've got my letter."

It is New Year's night. A sleighing party has gone over from Swanzey to Keene to meet Reuben and escort him back. The fire is burning brightly in the old fireplace. The old clock ticks regularly there in the corner, New Year's night and cold at that. How the hickory logs spit and how the sparks go whirling up the broad flue and out into the sharp clear night !

As a domestic picture of real life this has probably never been equaled on our stage ; its quiet realism is admirable. Seth and Cy are still quarreling and making up, and Aunt Tilda remains a spinster. There is probably not a line in the act that is not a literal transcription from New England customs and conversation. When Joshua says he will "go down into the cellar and set my mouse-trap," we have a touch of the actual, that no dramatist on



What-der-yen-soy ?

earth could have furnished out of his imagination. And when she asks Joshua to go in the front room "and turn the damper in the stovepipe, coz all the heat's a goin' up the chimbly," the absolute fidelity of the thing that every New England man has heard a thousand times is proof that the material of the play is genuine.



"THE HOBOKEN TERROR."



ONE OF THE FINEST.

This fidelity is seen in the contrast of home character and in the perfect truthfulness of the realistic details. Anna Maria Murdock, the best nurse in the hull county, and who comes in because she got a little lonesome, is known from Boston to Bridgeport, and is as familiar to us as Aunt Tilda herself. Then as to the details It lacks not one essential of the New England



kitchen ; bunches of corn, strings of dried apples, and slices of pumpkin festoon the kitchen walls. The old flint-lock hangs over the doorway. The old warming-pan, the bellows, tongs and shovel, hammered into form over a century ago, in the little historic village of Swanzey, N. H., where Mr. Thompson's forefathers were born and raised. What an eloquent part that old red cradle plays ! Did it ever strike you before that the New England cradle and barn were nearly always painted red ?

There is subtle cleverness in introducing this cradle at the end of so perfect a home story. It is the Alpha of domestic life, set in the Omega of the domestic drama.

After long years of forgetfulness, it was a pleasure to chase the memories back to the Old Homestead. It was so distinctively



Yankee. There seemed to be an odor of the pine woods running thro' it. The soft-blowing breezes that rocked the song bird's cradle came creeping across the tangled grasses, and my heart seemed to feel as the ground must, of an April day, when that



"*Reuben's here.*"

strange life is working upward, until every bush and twig shows some twinkling gem of leaf or flower, that smiles upon you as it kisses the sunlight.

But hark! There are the sleigh-bells jingling! The door is burst open—you can almost feel the cold air blowing in your face. Reuben is home again!



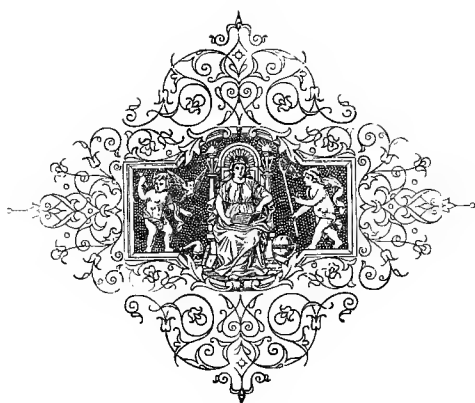
Any relation to old Hap-Hazard



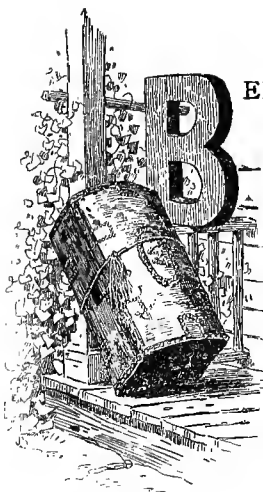
"Now Cy pull fair"

And so, with the song of "The Old Red Cradle" in our ears, and the recollections of the "Auld Lang Syne," with its homely beauty to carry away in our hearts, we seem to have gone back for an hour to the granite hills and warm hearts of our boyhood, and to have lived once more among the scenes that will always be the brightest and holiest in our memories.





TRIBUTES.



BELOW are a few tributes of admiration for Denman Thompson and "The Old Homestead," selected as representative of a large volume received since "The Old Homestead" began its remarkable engagement at the Academy of Music, New York City. Over 290,000 people saw the play at this historic theatre in the first three months of its run, and the receipts averaged a performance \$1,624.25. These are the largest returns accorded a theatrical enterprise in the history of the American stage at the prices, 25 cents, 50 cents, 75 cents

and \$1.00. The Academy of Music has been the scene of many glorious successes, and has a distinguished record, but to "The Old Homestead" belongs the honor of attracting the greatest number of people.

A. C. WHEELER, *Dramatic Critic New York World.*

Wherever Joshua Whitcomb's name is mentioned now there is a strain awakened like the far-off bells of New England.

He brought the smell of the sweet clover into our native drama and set up there the New England home with all its precious memories.

He might have ransacked the world and he could not have got a theme that would touch so many American hearts as the Old Homestead.

And if New England is the land of homesteads, the cradle of commonwealths, the school-house of patriots, the academy of statesmen, it was after all in the Homestead that our Websters, our Adams, our Everetts, our Longfellows got their earliest inspiration and imbibed the principles that made them known to the world.

That old homestead stands there yet on the stony hills and in the shady valleys, just as it stood when "Bunker Hill was fit." It has sent out generation after generation of brave men and women who have made the valleys of the Ohio and the Mississippi to blossom like the rose. They fought the battle of life with a hymn-book in one hand and a musket in the other. They drove the savage before them, and wherever they swung the axe they set up the meeting-house and the district school. They over-ran Ohio, they converted the prairies of Illinois into measureless gardens that fed the world, and their sons and daughters to-day are types of the hardihood and indomitable pluck that snatched states from barbarism all along the great domain of the West.

These men and women come from the New England Homestead. They had sterling piety, simple honesty and unconquerable thrift. With them shiftlessness was a crime.

They were made of granite and sunshine, and they went over this continent with the keenness of the winter's blast, and something of the nourishing gentleness of the summer's rain.

Of course it is the Home that makes men and women. Somebody has said *that the hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world*. And the New England Home, with its rugged simplicity, its quaintness and sternness, is the Home that Joshua Whitcomb puts before our eyes with its living, breathing New England people.

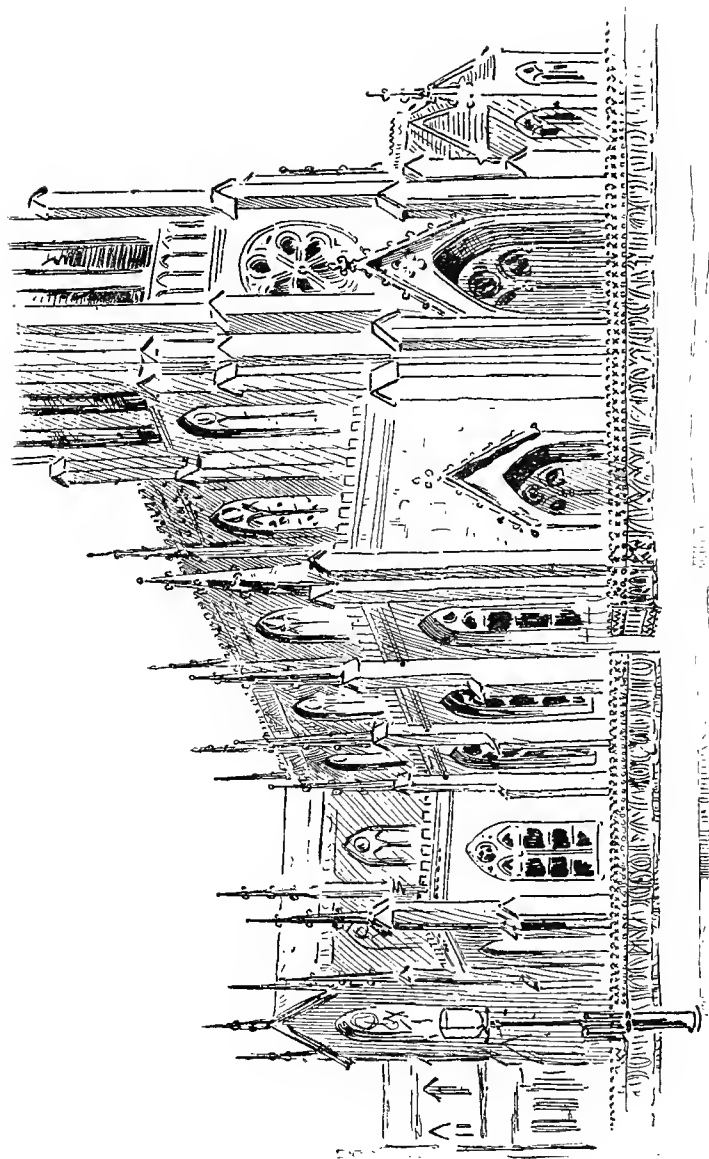
No one even of the third or fourth generation will fail to feel its charm and recognize its idyllic truth if he has one drop of New England blood in him. All that is sweetest and kindest in the boyhood past comes back with the suggestions of this play of "The Old Homestead."

INNOCENT AMUSEMENT.

REV. HENRY M. FIELD, *in the New York Evangelist.*

A few days since a resident of this city, who was born in Stockbridge, Mass., and whom we have known for the trifle of fifty years (it is really nearer sixty, but don't mention it), but who for the last thirty years has lived in New York, and is an honored member of Rev. Dr. Crosby's church, came to us with a face beaming with happiness. He had been to see a performance of "The Old Homestead" at the Academy of Music, which had brought back such memories of his childhood as made him a boy again. He had laughed and he had cried; but to hear him tell of it, he was about as happy in one as the other. The whole impression was, he affirmed, not only innocent and pure, but positively good; he had found at last a diversion which he thought healthful to body and mind, and which he insisted that *Christians ought to patronize*, if it were only to show that they were not opposed to innocent pleasures, but only to such as were connected with bad associations. Believing thus, he urged us strongly to go and see for ourselves.

Thus persuaded, we went, and we must say that we think our old friend was not far out of the way. "The Old Homestead" is a picture of country life in New England half a century ago. You may call it "a play," but it is a play such as might have been acted in the old times in any New England Academy, by the boys and girls, who wished to get up something for their own amusement, or perchance to raise a little money to furnish new cushions for the meeting-house. The only difference is that here everything is got up far more perfectly. Our readers will remember the Old Folks Concerts, which were so popular a few years ago, in which a number of good singers were dressed up in costumes such as our grandfathers and grandmothers wore, and sung the songs that the dear old grandfathers and grandmothers, who had fallen asleep, had sung a generation before. The Old Homestead is a similar revival of the ancient days. The "scenery" is rural and domestic; an old-fashioned kitchen, with



GRACE CHURCH. (OLD HOMESTEAD, ACT III.)

the farmer's family and his neighbors talking in the old Yankee dialect. A load of hay, drawn by oxen, lumbers across the stage and enters the barn. The hay-makers gather round an old well-sweep, and after drinking the pure water, sing

"The moss-covered bucket that hangs in the well."

Then the scene changes to the city, to which the farmer comes to visit an old acquaintance whom he had known when they were boys together; and his surprise at the splendor of the city mansion is very amusing. There is a view of Grace Church, from within which are heard voices singing as sweetly as any city choir. In front of this the old man takes his place to watch the ever-passing crowd, to see if he can discover a son, who, wandering away from the old home, took to bad ways, and was lost in the great city. At last the prodigal appears, and the father falls upon his neck. The return home is celebrated with rejoicings. The sleigh-bells jingle merrily as they bring the wanderer back, the fire blazes brightly on the hearth, and the family gather round it with happy and grateful hearts.

Such is an outline of this simple performance, the impression of which is as pure and wholesome as the most scrupulous could desire. The moral is good. The old man talks temperance to the prodigal as tenderly and yet as earnestly as any temperance lecturer, to which the audience heartily responded. Indeed it was a very sober audience, not at all a fashionable or theatre-going one, that seemed to be made up of descendants of New England, who came to have their memories revived of the old days and the old folks at home. If our providers of places of amusement were careful to give us such simple entertainments as this, parents would not need to be so constantly on their guard against the mischievous tendency of popular amusements upon their children.

FROM S. CHURCHILL, *the Author of "Thanksgiving Sixty Years Ago."*

DENMAN THOMPSON, ESQ., Academy of Music, N. Y. City:

Dear Sir—After witnessing the exhibitions you are giving at the Academy of Music in delineating the farm scenes of the

olden times, I am not surprised to see the throngs crowding around the ticket office in the morning for seats for the evening.

The character of the whole play is filling a vacuum of long existence in our want of a proper amusement and evening enjoyment, where a gentleman of refinement and culture can take his wife and daughters and be entertained without having their finer sensibilities disturbed by scenes that are seen and heard on the stage.

You have successfully introduced a play that furnishes innocent amusement, cheerful recreation and a pleasant diversion, enlivened by hilarious enjoyment.

To those more advanced in life it recalls the scenes and experience of their early days at the Old Homestead. To those in middle age the novelties furnish ample occasion for joyous amusement. To the young it gives a rare insight into old modes and manners, full of instruction. To those who have their nervous system taxed by excessive cares and burdensome anxiety, it gives a pleasant relaxation. To the full-fed and agile, with buoyant hopes, it arouses their temperament to a high pitch of mental enjoyment. Ladies of culture and pure sensibilities, who are disgusted with innuendos or double entendres in words or acts that blink toward lasciviousness, are the first to enjoy pure native wit or innocent humor, and laugh the loudest.

The man who can meet and supply these wants in the exigency, occupies a high and honorable position, and should guard against any temptation to lower the high standard of moral excellency that has so highly elevated the fame of Joshua Whitcomb in the esteem of your patrons.

S. CHURCHILL.

EUGENE FIELD'S OPINION OF DENMAN THOMPSON'S ART.

The play of "The Old Homestead" is one which can be enjoyed over and over again; each time some new and delicate beauty appears, or some pleasant memory is awakened, or some sweet fancy is suggested. Certain it is that no other play before us at the present time abounds in such wholesome material as we find in the homely pictures and the genial humor and the tender pathos presented by Denman Thompson in his latest work.

Amid all the changes and fluctuations to which our stage has been subjected, there has obtained a strong demand for a

purely American drama—a play which should truthfully illustrate a type of our humanity. This demand is fully answered, we think, in “The Old Homestead,” a production so complete in its naturalness that it seems to be not a play but actual bits of Yankeedom and of Yankee flesh and blood plucked from the Down-East and spread before us for our delectation and benefit. Denman Thompson himself is unquestionably the only delineator of Yankee character the stage has had ; he does not *act*—he *is*. Until he gave us Uncle Josh, the Yankee of the playhouse was simply a buffoonish freak, to be ranked with the conventional negro minstrel and the typical stage Irishman.

“The Old Homestead,” so truthful of illustration and so pure and kindly of motive, may be accepted as altogether the best American play yet produced.

We who live in the West feel under peculiar obligations to Denman Thompson for the good he brings to us in this rare work of his. Many of us are unable to get back to the home, the people and the scenes of our youth. Hills, plains and rivers intervene ; the distance is great and this busy Western life of ours is exacting in its demands. Sometimes business, sometimes ill health, and sometimes poverty keeps us from revisiting the old homestead and the old folks, but none of us ever loses his love and veneration for the dear scenes and the kindly spirits about which the tendrils of memory cling so tenderly. In Uncle Joshua Whitcomb we recognize an old friend ; we knew him in Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire—yes, and in York State too. His name was not Joshua Whitcomb in the old days, but he was then the same lovable character as he is to-day, his heart as tender, his charity as universal, his humor as quaint, his pathos as tender. So, while you and I and others may disagree as to who he was when we were boys, we do agree that each of us knew him then, and that we all love him now. He is an old friend come from among the hills that once did girt us round about, and he has transplanted out here among the prairies patches of our old New England ; and we seem to breathe once more the atmos-

phere of those hills, and we seem to hear the humming of bees and to scent the fragrance of lilacs and wintergreen.

We laugh riotously, for it is fun to be boys and girls again ; but we cry, too, for in all we see and hear there is so much of suggestion. We see more than our eyes behold, and hear more than that which falls upon our ears ; faces that are dust now, voices which were hushed long ago—these are the sights and these the sounds recalled by the magic of Denman Thompson's art.—*Eugene Field, in the Chicago News, March, 1888.*

“THE OLD HOMESTEAD.”

Jest as atween the awk'ard lines a hand we love has penn'd
Appears a meanin' hid from other eyes ;
So, in your simple, homespun art, old honest Yankee friend,
A power o' tearful, sweet suggestion lies.
We see it all—the pictur' that your mem'ries hold so dear—
The homestead in New England far away ;
And the vision is so nat'ral-like we almost seem to hear
The voices that were heshed but yesterday.

Ah! who'd ha' thought the music of that distant childhood time
Would sleep through all the changeful, bitter years
To waken into melodies like Chris'mas bells a-chime
An' to claim the ready tribute of our tears!

Why, the robins in the maples an' the blackbirds 'roun the pond,
The crickets an' the locusts in the leaves,
The brook that chased the trout adown the hillside jest beyond.
An' the swallows in their nests beneath the eaves—
They all come troopin' back with you, dear Uncle Josh, to-day,
An' they seem to sing with all the joyous zest
Of the days when we were Yankee boys an' Yankee girls at play,
With nary thought of “livin' way out West!”

God bless ye, Denman Thomps'n, for the good y' do our hearts
With this music an' these memories o' youth—
God bless ye for the faculty that tops all human arts,
The good ol' Yankee faculty of Truth !

EUGENE FIELD.

THAT "OLD HOMESTEAD."

Editorial from The Christian At Work, December 6, 1888.

"The Old Homestead," now being performed at the Academy of Music, seems to us as near an approach as possible as to what a play should be. It depicts very truthfully country life in New England about half a century ago.

The scenery is very rural and domestic in character, particularly that in which a load of hay is drawn on the stage by live oxen, and the haymakers subsequently gathering around the old well singing "The moss-covered bucket that hangs in the well." City life, too, is also faithfully portrayed, and the audience are treated to an excellent picture of Grace Church, from which are heard issuing strains of sweet music by the choir.

Altogether, the moral of the play is decidedly good, and were every caterer for public entertainment to give us so healthful and innocent a performance as this is, we feel sure parents and guardians of youth would no longer cry out as they now do against the immorality of theatre-going. Entertainments of this sort are entitled to the staunchest support of the religious press.

MR. E. A. DITMAR, *Dramatic Critic New York Times, Sept. 2, 1888.*

A few more words about "The Old Homestead" will be appropriate now that Mr. Denman Thompson and his associates have settled down at the Academy for a long stay. When a piece like this, which seems to defy all the canons of dramatic construction, gains not only the favor of the big public, but compels the admiration as well of people who like to think themselves

critical in artistic matters, there is apt to be a sort of puzzled feeling in the community regarding it. It is not often that a good play is made with so little apparent regard for the elementary rules of playwriting, and people are apt to forget one before another is produced. The ordinary playwright still plods along endeavoring to adapt what he sees and feels in life, or what somebody else has seen and felt and expressed in narrative form, to the conventional forms and devices that prevail on the stage. But the lesson that "The Old Homestead" teaches, and that might have been learned by heart years ago from other sources, is that the faithful portrayal of human nature, slightly idealized, will always win the admiration of the masses and compel the praise of the critics. As a matter of fact, on close inspection it will be found that "The Old Homestead" is constructed with more regard for the dramatist's rules than appears at first sight. The disregard of the canons is more seeming than actual. The desultory character of Act II., a shrewd submission to the popular taste for pure farce, is apt to mislead the spectator and make him lose sight of the coherence and symmetry of the scheme. The second act contains one delightful passage, the dialogue between the two old men who were barefooted boys together among the New Hampshire hills. The rest is flummery and horse-play farce, the fun of which is older than Buckstone's Cousin Joe, older even than Royal Tyler's much-talked-of "Contrast." Without this "The Old Homestead" would be a perfect play. Even with the farce it is a good play, moving the sympathies by an exposition of the goodness and purity in humanity, touching the heart with general pathos, bubbling with humor, sparkling with homely wit. The first, third and fourth acts would make the play, with the one good bit of writing in Act II. transferred to the street scene. Then there would be set before the spectator, more harmoniously than at present, a simple study of character involved in incidents which, if not thrilling, are essentially dramatic. The force of opposing influences is exerted in the play, though it contains neither a formidable villain nor a melodramatic hero. The climaxes are striking and logical. The plot is not

complex, but it is sufficient, and the interest is maintained by the revelations of human character and not, as some people seem to think, by the interpolated music, which is quite unobjectionable but not at all necessary. The central figure is a true type of American character idealized. Cyrus Prime, Aunt Matilda, and the other New Hampshire folks are real personages. The last act is a marvelously lifelike picture of home in New England, a farmer's home in its most cheerful aspect. The poetry of the hills and fields is in the piece. Whoever wrote the text of this play, and there must have been a trained hand and a poetic brain employed in the work, deserves the thanks of theatre-goers. It is a good thing to be reminded once in a while that the word "dramatic" does not necessarily convey an idea of rapine and assassination and marital infelicity. It is a good thing to be able to prove that a sympathetic chord can be struck in the public heart by a stage picture of homely goodness and piety and faith in human kind. To be sure, there is no love interest in the play. It resembles "Macbeth" in that one particular. But the spirit of happy youth and maidenhood is preserved in it, and it is not essential always to have a wedding in prospect when the curtain falls. So that "The Old Homestead," if not a model for playwrights, is a distinctively good play, apart from Denman Thompson's impersonation of the farmer. Let us acknowledge the fact and wonder no longer why we all like it.

GOOD WORDS FROM THE CLERGY.

I am glad the day has come when a clergyman can go to a first-class play without being hauled over the coals by fanatical Christians.

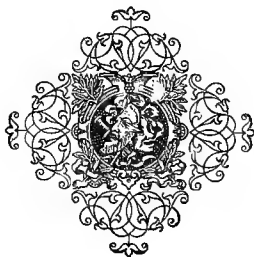
REV. JOHN L. SCUDDER,
First Congregational Church, Jersey City.

I would be only too glad that such plays could be encouraged. You are doing a good work. Success attend you.

REV. GEORGE R. VAN DE WATER,
St. Andrew's Church, New York.

I beg to add my recommendation of that most excellent moral play. I have seen it twice, and have advised my people, more particularly the young men's guild and the older boys of the Sunday school, to go and see it. I consider your play equal to a dozen sermons, bringing home as it does so forcibly the lesson of the Fifth Commandment. God bless and prosper you in the good work you are doing through your play among the young men and boys of New York.

REV. EDWD. WALLACE NEIL,
Church of St. Andrew-the-Martyr.



"THE OLD HOMESTEAD" A MORAL AGENT.

There has always been more or less antagonism between the church and theatre. The latter has been charged, with a good deal of force and more passion, with being a nurturing place for man's lower nature. The natural man gravitates to evil if left to himself, and the theatre favors this native abandon. So argue they, or many of them who are appointed to speak for the former, which represents a system of life more powerful for good than all the agencies of men. But there are personal defects—aye, lots of them—in those who stand forth with prominence to present its virtues. That does not detract from the merit of the system of religion, though to some minds it has a bad effect, and leads them into wild declarations of "nonsense," "folly" and other empty missiles of the quick-feeling and light-headed.

The theatre has had to stand father for a good many offences against sound morals that bear the same relation to justice that the antics of a Salvation bugler do to revealed religion. Its mantle has been adopted by brazen types of forbidden men and women, who have dragged its good name and purpose down as they had their own flesh and soul. But every noble institution has had some such experience. The theatre is not alone in this respect. It fulfills a natural want and ought to be good and do good, and shall, to endure. Its power for reaching the masses is almost unequaled. Its misuse by the clumsy or degraded does not constitute an inherent wrong. Sacred truths have been proclaimed by foul mouths. Religious services have been mocked by charlatans in vestments. The spirit of the agent was corrupt, but not the cause he desecrated. The theatre in its right use affects man with refreshment and knowl-

edge. It vivifies truth to the appreciation as a magnifying glass does a mineral object. It softens the hard lines of care in one's face with humorous ideas in the lives of others. It acts on the spirit as a good dinner upon a hungry body. Its influence is quickening and lingering. A potent moral agent it may be, a cheering effect it generally has, and a personal friend it should always be when found in a pure estate.

"The Old Homestead" is an example of the theatre in its best expression. It is as full of wholesome life as the sun, and warms the heart and mind into activities of health and cheer. What sermonizer, however able he might be in text and manner, could reach the tendrils of so many natures and infuse a new and warm sense of feeling for the graces of an honest character? The old rustic king, Joshua Whitcomb, embodies in his humble life the gracious outcome of a simple observance of God's laws as written in the Holy Scriptures and the changing forms of nature around him. It is an object lesson in homely virtues without any token of study. It is extracting the strength of our catechism under blue skies, with the air soft and sweet and the birds singing. Ministers of the gospel, noble men in mind and mission, have recognized this truth and gone so far as to publicly praise the beautiful play, and advise their parishioners to go and enjoy its delightful atmosphere. This is evangelical common sense. It is separating the wheat from the chaff and inculcating a desire for the best among plays as among books, and exhibiting a broadness and fairness of mind which commands respect and enlists followers. It is holding out the hand of fellowship to an agency that helps to brighten and better a troublous world which the church seeks to draw toward soberer thoughts of heaven. It is a practical sort of Christianity that is ready to believe in forces for good without the ken of a narrow theological set. It sees the illustrative value of "The Old Homestead" and its rugged characters in a moral sense, and hails the portraiture in flesh and blood of a pious, strong and honest type of manhood, which comes near to our own day and nature and makes us yearn for his trustful companionship.

The actor and minister should work together in harmony of spirit, though separate in manner, harboring no resentment, and the world will be the gainer. This sympathy will improve the feeling and work of both and retard the noxious growth which spreads over fields the soil of which is good, but husbandry bad.

Some one has likened a visit to "The Old Homestead," at the Academy, to the trip of a waif of the city to the country in the burning hot days of summer. The wide, open country, clear blue sky, sparkling pure water, scented fields, wholesome food and exercise and smiling friends, blow into blazing and healthy energy the fires of youth which had been banked and hushed by the grit of entailed poverty and ignorance. They are possessed with a strange feeling of strength, gladness and hope. The sunshine of heaven, pure and untrammelled, has poured into their shadowed lives, and brought a glow and vigor which blossomed into smiles and words like the purple crown of a lilac bush, long repressed by dense foliage and shade. A noble charity is this fund which gives to the little wanderers of a big city an annual taste of sky and woods, and stirs their cheeks and eyes with an emotion of pleasure which sits so well on childhood.

Fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, children of an older growth, are taken by "The Old Homestead" upon a spiritual excursion with much the same joyous effect. The spirit of the world is vexatious at best. The life of a large city is driving and selfish. We are unmercifully knocked about and trampled upon by Mammon's worshippers, and must be well supplied, indeed, with Nature's gifts to take root and grow with any special profit and bloom. The tired eye, dull skin, nervous manner, unsettled feelings, the taxes Nature imposes upon metropolitan thrift, are banished at "The Old Homestead" by the healing properties of precious memories, renewed cheer of heart, and a calm, contented life, of which we seem to partake with a quickening as new as delicious.

Are there any who can go away from "The Old Homestead" at the Academy and not feel better for the time they

spent in its delightful association? I cannot think so. It bespeaks a depravity, to assume this, that I don't think exists. The pure, unselfish, divine love of father and mother for a child will always reach the heart, no matter how low the moral status of the person may be, if exhibited in natural tones of flesh and blood. The stronger element of a mother's devotion is wanting in "The Old Homestead," but there is a paternal honesty and simplicity of affection which reaches the tendrils of feeling and inculcates a good lesson. It is an unadorned fact that a number of young men have been reclaimed from the habit of drink by the powerful effect of situations and scenes in this play. And also that many a wayward son who had left his loving home to roam, and gave it little thought and no words of remembrance afterward, was induced to turn longingly toward that sanctified spot, and give unto it and himself a cheer and strength that cannot be measured. This is the difference between theory and demonstration. Do you think pictorial language could accomplish this? It is more than doubtful. Seeing is believing with the average of the multitude. The evolution of sin in a character focused clearly before us, and without any affectation of science, art or theology, is pretty sure to impress soundly. Is this a contrary course to the church? Could any text be more pure, simple and significant of virtue and truth than the lines of homely Joshua Whitcomb and his neighbors? And it has the added merit of humor, grateful and abundant, and changing characters and scenes of good grain and natural color, all of which attract the eye and heart, and impress the affections with wholesome interest as few plays are capable.

Another good effect of this pure, domestic play has been that it has drawn to the theatre a host of people who had never been to a public place of amusement before. I have observed lots of them with curious interest. You may know them by the timid way they enter the ticket door, as like as not "curtseying" to the ticket-taker, after the good old-fashioned country custom on meeting a stranger. I have seen them return to the gate, blushing and hesitating, with the coupons which they

thought in their innocent souls a mistake. They follow the usher awkwardly and settle into their places as if timid of results. They do not look the audience over with that self-important air of the city-bred, but glance around shyly, as if half ashamed they might be recognized, and redden like a baby if caught. I have watched them struggle to keep a quiet manner, like many of those about them, as the play proceeded and they recognized familiar and enjoying faces and incidents, but, at last, forgetful of occasion, laugh and sway with an energy that was simply delightful for utter freshness.

They have lingered about the big old play-house after all was over, curiously studying the "ins and outs" of the generous building, and some have sought out Mr. Thompson to tell him how well he pictured neighbors "down our way."

Is there not enough in these ministering influences for wholesome pleasure and thought in "The Old Homestead" to justify the title of this chapter? It does not happen to the lot of many to be so powerful in lifting up and rejoicing men, through the medium of theatrical work, as has fallen to Denman Thompson.

He well deserves the commendation of the clergy, the respect and admiration of his profession, and the affectionate interest of the public.



PROGRAMME

OF THE

FIRST PRESENTATION

—OF—

THE OLD HOMESTEAD,

AT THE

ACADEMY, NEW YORK.

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Saturday Matinee.

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THOMPSON
—IN THE—
Old Homestead

WRITTEN BY

DENMAN THOMPSON and GEO. W. RYER.

Cast of Characters and Synopsis of Scenes :

FIRST ACT.

SCENE.

HOMESTEAD FARM
OF THE
WHITCOMBS,
SWANZEY, N. H.

PAINTED BY
PHILIPPOTEAUX.

Joshua Whitcomb.....	Denman Thompson
Cy Prime.....	Geo. A. Beane
Happy Jack.....	Walter Gale
Frank Hopkins.....	Chauncey Olcott
Eb. Ganzey.....	J. L. Morgan
John Freeman.....	Frank Thompson
Aunt Matilda Whitcomb.....	Mrs. Louisa Morse
Rickety Ann.....	Miss Annie Thompson
Miss Annie Hopkins.....	Miss Venie Thompson
Miss Nellie Freeman.....	Miss Lillian Stone
Maggie O'Flaherty.....	Miss Minnie Luckstone

THE OLD HOMESTEAD DOUBLE QUARTETTE
Is composed of the following :

Messrs. Olcott, Earle, Akerley, Baker, Myers, Kruger, Kammerlee, Law.

SECOND ACT.

SCENE.

INTERIOR

OF THE

HOPKINS MANSION,

NEW YORK CITY.

PAINTED BY

GOATCHER.

Joshua Whitcomb.....	Denman Thompson
Henry Hopkins.....	Walter Lenox, Sr.
Judge Patterson.....	Gus Kammerlee
Frank Hopkins.....	Chauncey Olcott
Francois Fogarty.....	Frank Mara
Mrs. Henry Hopkins...	Miss Rosa Cook
Miss Annie Hopkins.....	Miss Venie Thompson
Miss Nellie Patterson.....	Miss Annie Thompson
Miss Cora Patterson.....	Miss Irene Comstock

THIRD ACT.

SCENE.

**GRACE CHURCH AT
NIGHT,**

**BROADWAY,
NEW YORK CITY,**

PAINTED BY

GOATCHER.

Joshua Whitcomb.....	Denman Thompson
Henry Hopkins....	Walter Lenox, Sr.
Jack Hazzard.....	Walter Gale
Reuben Whitcomb.....	Harry Earle
Hoboken Terror	J. L. Morgan
The Dude.....	Frank Thompson
One of the Finest.....	Tom Law
U. S. Letter Carrier.....	C. M. Richardson
Mrs. Maguire.....	Miss Rosa Cook

"THE PALMS,"

Rendered by Chauncey Olcott and "The Old Homestead" Chohr.

FOURTH ACT.

SCENE.

KITCHEN

IN THE

OLD HOMESTEAD.

PAINTED BY

GOATCHER.

Joshua Whitcomb.....	Denman Thompson
Cy Prime.....	Geo. A. Beane
Seth Perkins.....	Walter Lenox, Sr.
Jack Hazzard.....	Walter Gale
Reuben Whitcomb	Harry Earle
Eb. Ganzey.....	J. L. Morgan
Len Holbrook.....	C. M. Richardson
Pat Clancy.....	Frank Mara
Aunt Matilda	Mrs. Louisa Morse
Mrs. Murdock.....	Miss Marie Kimball
Rickety Ann.....	Miss Annie Thompson
The Three }	Miss Minnie Luckstone
Stratton Gals }	Miss Lillian Stone
	Miss Baker

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HENRY O'ROURKE.....	Advertising Agent

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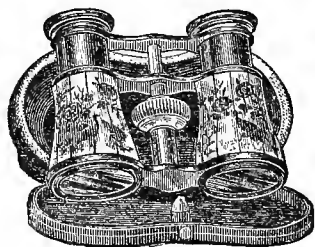
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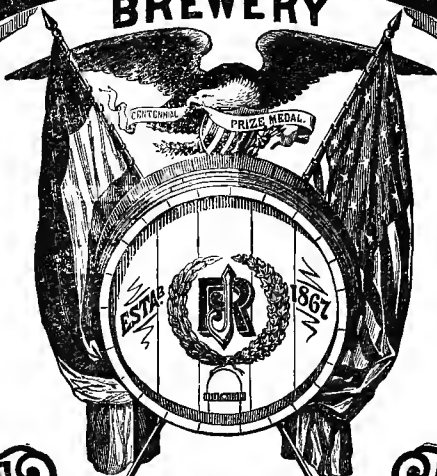
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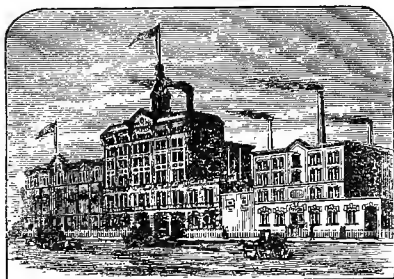
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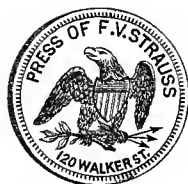
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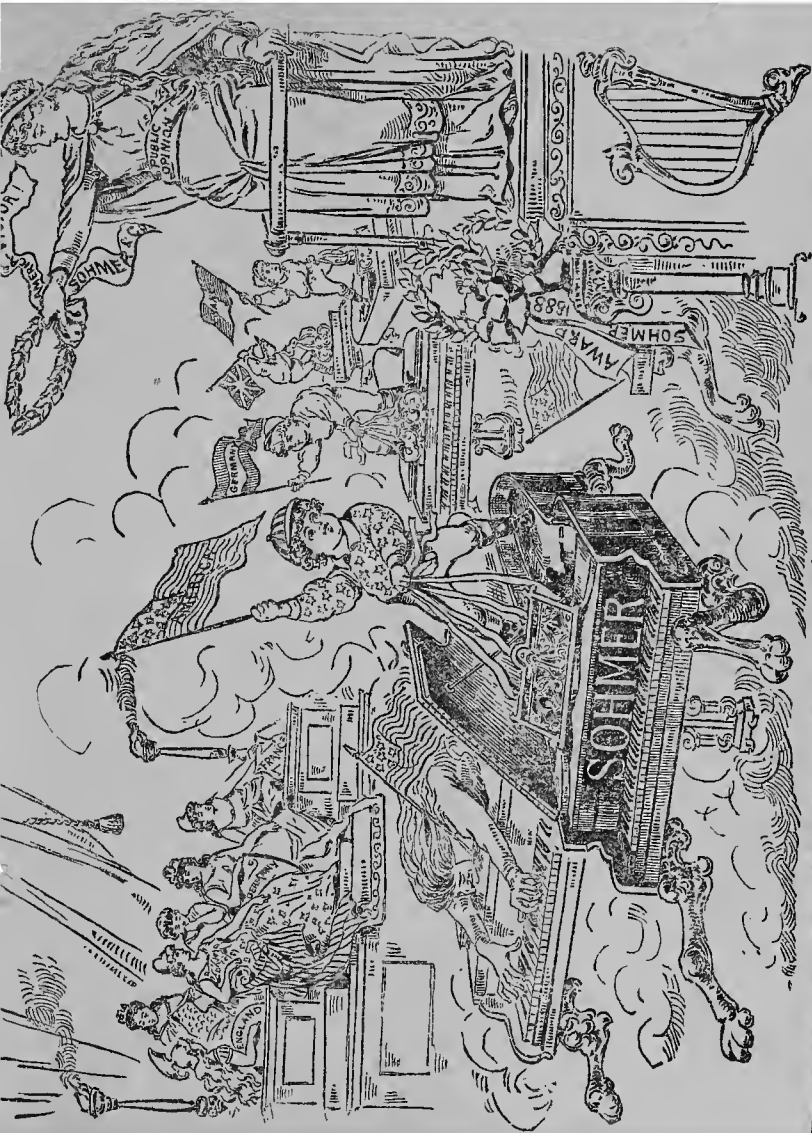
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